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ABSTRACT

The 29 abstracts in this volume describe innovative approaches to teaching and learning in the community college. Topics covered include the following: (1) strategies for providing management training to faculty and staff; (2) activities to help developmental mathematics students overcome obstacles to success in mathematics; (3) incorporating technology into mathematics classrooms; (4) developing an orientation conference for first-time freshmen students; (5) developing alternate sources of revenue; (6) implementing honors symposia; (7) developing an exchange program for public speaking courses; (8) using content-related humor in the classroom; (9) moving toward computer-mediated communication without networked computers and electronic mail; (10) student-centered composition classes; (11) using the World Wide Web, electronic mail, and campus networks to enrich classes and academic support services; (12) develop programs to ease first-time students into the college experience; (13) the characteristics of college catalogs; (14) guidelines for the effective use of teaching assistants; (15) Middle College, a high school-college enrollment program in California for at-risk students; (16) team-teaching in an interdisciplinary environment; (17) using voice mail to provide information on lectures; (18) the use of computer-assisted writing; (19) the use of commemorative speeches in a speech class; (20) using spreadsheets of grades to motivate students; (21) using dialogues to introduce students to persuasive writing; and (22) setting standards for student behavior. (HAA)

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VOLUME XVIII, NUMBER 1

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

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Thanks, Mitch

Imagine my surprise when Mitch—who had squeaked out of English 101 with a weak, weak C—gave his first speech in his public speaking course and captivated his audience as he told them about mounting a deer head. But my surprise was not as great as my frustration. Standing before me was a student who had failed to reach his potential in written communication. Mitch had a message to give and give it he did when he had a responsive audience before his eyes and the written page out of his mind. But in English 101 his fear of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical aspects of writing had caused him to freeze up. He had written the bare minimum of sentences in lifeless, extremely ineffective language. I was not frustrated because I had required Mitch to write correctly in English 101. I was frustrated that I had not gotten Mitch to write correctly the instructional and exciting messages that were concealed inside him.

The incident with Mitch made me think about what he and I could have accomplished if he had delivered his effective message orally and then written it, correcting the grammar and mechanics, keeping style and content. Thanks to Mitch, the "combination class"—a double-period credit class for English 101 and Speech 108 (public speaking)—was conceived. The basic principle behind the course was simple, logical, and widely practiced: students can use their strengths to overcome their weaknesses. I constantly modify the course, but the basic plan is simple and can be a springboard for any teacher of communication skills.

The course includes four major speeches. Each student does discovery, thinking, and planning for the first major speech and then delivers the speech for a grade. Next the student makes a written draft of this speech, revises and edits the draft, and turns in the essay for a grade.

The next major speech begins with discovery, thinking, and planning, followed by a drafted essay. Students revise the essay and develop an outline for a speech. They edit their essays while the speeches are presented in class, and then they turn in the essays for grades.

Before the third major speech, I ask the students which they prefer to do first—the speaking or the writing—and what factors play a part in the decision. I then encourage each to follow their most effective method on the third communication unit.

Because of the time restraints of the quarter system, students give the final major speech the last few days of the quarter and are not required to turn in an essay. However, I give the students the option of writing their English final examination, an essay, on the final speech. Most elect to do so.

Of course, while the students are writing and orally presenting these four major communication units, they also give shorter, more informal speeches. They write other formal essays and numerous written speech evaluations. In fact, all students write the equivalent of 16 or more essays most quarters; some who do extra-credit work write more.

The results have been even better than I had expected. Members of the classes have included students who have placed into English 101, students who have taken and exited developmental English classes, and students who have failed English 101 in prior quarters. During the six quarters I have taught the course, every student has passed the departmental essay examination—an essay graded by at least two other instructors. Only a few students have failed to make the required exit grades; in almost every case in which a student has not exited a course, he or she has failed to do the required work in a timely manner.

Other benefits of the class cannot be quantified, but they are obvious to me and to the students. Early in their college career, the students gain basic communication skills—both written *and* oral—that they need in almost all other college courses. Their confidence in themselves grows from meeting the challenge of standing before their peers and presenting their knowledge and experience and personalities—and finding these aspects of themselves to be acceptable. And the double period allows students enough time to develop friendships with and respect for each other; thus, the class provides them with that identity group which many need to be successful in their academic work.

Charlotte S. Pfeiffer, *Instructor, English and Speech*

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Doing Men's Work

In the late 1970's, many of my students, both male and female, began to ask why the college provided several courses and programs for women, but offered few for men. Many men over the age of 25 were returning to school and needing specific support services. After receiving the college's financial and institutional commitments, we began the men's program in August 1982.

The program encourages and supports the creation of college credit courses that focus on men's issues exclusively—a notable example, "Moving Toward Conscious Manhood: Being a Man in the '90's." This elective, taught by a professor of psychology and the co-chair of Men's Day, is for men only and addresses such critical issues as fathering, friendship, relationships, the male mystique, and male-bashing.

The program includes a popular support group—about 15 men meet bi-weekly in a place where participants can receive and give support and advice in a safe, nurturing environment. Some of the men have attended from the beginning; others have attended a few meetings and moved on. Men are socialized to disconnect, but this group gives them permission to offer and receive support and to be nurtured and understood by other men.

In 1993, we held our first Men's Day, which included workshops on fathering, men's health issues, and improving communication skills. This first event attracted 105 participants, and 205 (200 men, 5 women) in 1994. As one man who attended both events put it, "Where else can men go and spend a day (and pay a small fee) to learn about and celebrate manhood with a couple of hundred guys?"

The program has become a valuable asset to the college and to the men and women of the community. Men who have experienced program benefits firsthand have been major sources of support.

Steven J. Schada, *Professor, Sociology, and Coordinator, Men's Program*

For further information, contact the author at Oakton Community College, 1600 East Golf Road, Des Plaines, IL 60016.

Announcing NISOD's eighteenth annual

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★ Terry O'Banion, *Executive Director, League for Innovation in the Community College (CA)*

Tuesday, May 28

★ Kay McClenney, *Vice President, Education Commission of the States (CO)*

Wednesday, May 29

★ 1996 NISOD Excellence Awards Ceremony
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★ Vocal Performances by Arnette Ward, *Provost, Chandler-Gilbert Community College (AZ)*

★ **For more information,** *contact Suanne Roueche, Director, NISOD, at 512/471-7545, or (512) 471-9426 (fax).*

Suanne D. Roueche, Editor
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Mining and Refining the Gold from Within: A College's Leadership Academy

Community colleges in the U.S. provide a large percentage of the training for business and industry across the country. But how often do colleges make the same excellent management training provided to colleagues in the business world available to their own faculty and staff?

Three years ago, Salt Lake Community College decided that it was time to offer high-quality, advanced management training to its own staff, as it is provided to 650 businesses across the Salt Lake Valley. SLCC developed the Leadership Academy, a management training seminar, to be held on an annual basis. Although not original with SLCC, the idea for a Leadership Academy has proven valuable in helping to identify and refine the talents and skills of managers and potential leaders from across the institution.

Participant Selection

Participation in the Academy is open by application to any faculty member or supervisor from the college. Applicants are asked to identify why they would like to participate and what they could contribute to the group. Much of the success of the Academy is the result of the outstanding synergy created among participants as they wrestle with different issues. Each member is expected to actively engage with facilitators' and colleagues' presentations, exercises, and simulations that build a breadth of understanding and improve skills in a range of relevant areas. A typical Academy will have 25 participants; 12 selected by open application and 10 nominated directly by members of the President's Cabinet; three standing slots are held for the incoming presidents of the Faculty Senate, the Faculty Association, and the Staff Association.

Logistics

The Academy is held Monday through Thursday, sometime during the summer. Each day begins at 7:30 with a continental breakfast. At 7:50, housekeeping items are taken care of and the first presentation begins promptly at 8:00. The program continues throughout the day, concluding at 5:00. On the final day, the group adjourns at 3:30 and gathers at the president's home for an evaluation session, an informal graduation, and a barbecue dinner.

The academy is always held in a location that is convenient, has adequate parking, is away from campus (where participants are not interrupted by phone calls or other distractions), and is interesting. For two years, the Academy was held at the Alumni House at the University of Utah, a lovely location that allowed organizers to take advantage of outstanding faculty and administrators from the university as part of the Academy faculty. This past summer the Academy was held in a legislative hearing chamber at the Utah State Capitol. The president of the State Senate provided a keynote address, and participants were privileged to have the lieutenant governor as speaker. Inviting such dignitaries to participate in the Academy served a dual purpose—exposing faculty and staff to key opinion leaders in the state, and providing an opportunity for these same leaders to learn more about what the college is doing.

Various books on management and leadership are selected as texts for the Academy. Participants receive the books in advance and are expected to complete the assigned reading and participate in an active book review session, sometimes held over lunch.

Curriculum

Topics covered in the Leadership Academy vary each year, but typically they include such issues as dealing with organizational change and team-building. The commissioner of the Utah System of Higher Education is invited to give an overview of how the state system of higher education is governed and to address topical issues facing the system, such as obtaining the technical and fiscal resources necessary to fully connect colleges and universities to the electronic highway.

A key session is held each year on the college budget—e.g., the sources of funds and the processes by which fiscal decisions are made. Also included may be a session on institutional planning—looking at where

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the college has been and where it is going, or at policies (state statutes, regents' policies, and internal policies and procedures) by which the college lives and operates.

An entire day is dedicated to issues related to people management and supervision. Sessions may cover such varied topics as violence in the workplace, good hiring and evaluation practices, working with difficult people and situations, and progressive discipline.

The final day focuses on personal development strategies, with a half-day session on such topics as "Seven Habits of Highly Successful People" with John Covey, from the Covey Leadership Center. The president of SLCC wraps up each Leadership Academy with a presentation on his personal vision of leadership.

SLCC has found that a mix of outside and key college presenters works well. Outside presenters bring a fresh perspective and added credibility to the week. However, internal presenters understand the college and are able to focus their presentations directly on college needs. Every member of the President's Cabinet is responsible for a presentation each year. In addition, the deans, the directors of personnel and equal opportunity, the college attorney, and the director of campus planning have also been involved in presentations.

The most successful sessions are those that get people involved. Changing the pace throughout the day is important. The Academy organizers strongly encourage presenters to utilize role plays, simulations, and small group techniques to keep participants actively involved. At the end of a long day, short skill-building sessions that are useful and interesting but do not require the same intense energy levels—such as, meeting management or memory improvement—are scheduled.

Similarly, staff provide daily lunches as part of the Academy—an outdoor picnic box lunch, or lunch at a downtown club that serves as the meeting place for movers and shakers in the community, or lunch in the Capitol rotunda. The lunches are fun, help build the team, and make the Academy a popular event.

Establishing trust and developing an ability to work in groups are critical to the success of the Academy. Organizers have found that it is very important to have a team-building activity on the very first day. This year's activity was to break into five teams; each team was given a set supply of materials and the task of designing, building, and decorating a kite. At lunchtime the group adjourned to the Capitol lawn to see which team's kite flew the highest and stayed up the longest. In addition to good fun, such activities build a sense of camaraderie that carries over into the work of the Academy. Fun prizes reward team efforts, and there never are any real losers.

Each member of the President's Cabinet demonstrates his or her personal commitment to the Academy by attending the entire week's sessions each year. The most consistent comment in the closing evaluation is that the single greatest gift of the Academy is getting to know the president and vice presidents as real people. Participants realize that if the president and his cabinet members are willing to take the time to be there, that this indeed is important.

Benefits

What sorts of benefits have evolved from the Academy? The original intent of the Academy was to provide an opportunity for faculty and staff to prepare for future positions as SLCC administrators. However, secondary benefits have become apparent. Faculty come away with a new appreciation for fiscal realities that have greatly improved the nature of salary discussions each year. As one Faculty Senate president put it, "I know who to call now. When I hear a crazy rumor, I feel comfortable picking up the phone and going straight to the appropriate vice president to get the whole picture, instead of reading my own interpretation into the story."

Other staff and faculty have a new appreciation for the challenges SLCC faces during the legislative session each year and a deeper understanding of governance issues. They realize that there are no secrets. And after participating in a simulation where they have to make hard decisions about which college priorities get funded and which get cut, they have a fresh appreciation for the difficult job college administrators undertake each year in stretching limited public funds to meet the diverse educational needs at the institution.

Overall, the Leadership Academy has proven to be a great resource for strengthening the quality of teamwork and communication across the entire institution. In fact, one of the major challenges now is deciding how to respond to the number of former participants who are petitioning to participate again.

Katherine Boswell, *Graduate Student, Community College Leadership Program; on leave from her position as Assistant to the President, Salt Lake Community College, Utah.*

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Overcoming Roadblocks to Learning Math

In teaching basic algebra, I have found commonalities among developmental math students that stand in the way of their success, aside from poor backgrounds in math skills. To address these roadblocks, I experiment with various homework and extra credit assignments to develop and facilitate the analytical thinking skills of *any* math student.

My students always challenge me with "When will we ever use this stuff?" or "Why do we have to learn this?" So I turn the tables and challenge them to write a paper or present a problem to explain how they use something they have learned in the math course in their "real life."

Some students choose to construct a problem that occurred, or might occur, in life and to solve it algebraically—such as a uniform motion problem to determine how fast someone had been driving or a simultaneous equation and substitution problem to determine the money owed for a pizza party with various pies and different toppings.

I have been gratified to see that, when put to the test, students realize that the analytical skills they learn in an algebra class are universally valuable, that succeeding in something as rigorous as algebra is a good predictor for success in other areas, and that parents will share a large part of the responsibility for ensuring that we do not raise future generations of "math anxious" students.

Responses have indicated some real thought, in addition to a change in attitude, about math. Some themes recur again and again:

> "I did not realize how much algebra I already knew and had been using in everyday life."
> "If you approach a solution to a problem in a logical manner, then your problem usually doesn't seem that big or difficult."
> "In taking this class I have experienced a feeling of accomplishment, and my self-esteem was built up."

Another assignment helps students integrate individual topics into the "big picture" of the whole course. When students view the individual topics as unrelated fragments, they are confused and anxious. When topics can be seen as pieces of a larger puzzle, they develop a feeling of accomplishment. To help them achieve this feeling, I require that they pick four homework problems from a chapter we have just completed, show how they are solved, and describe the different skills (learned in an *earlier* chapter) that were required to complete each problem. The analytical skills that are required to do this assignment do not come easily to a developmental algebra student. As a matter of fact, the ability to accomplish this analysis is actually one of the goals of a math curriculum! It often takes most of the semester for some of the students to realize that what I want is *not* a description of the problem-solving steps learned in the current chapter, but a reference to an *earlier* topic that had to be mastered in order to learn and to execute the new steps. Once they realize this, they usually have no trouble completing the assignment and enjoy seeing how the various topics and chapters create a more complete picture.

Finally, a third activity is a weekly group quiz, usually four questions from the homework, including topics covered since the last quiz. It is a good review, and the major advantage is the group work. The students actually exhibit a more positive attitude toward the class, the material, and the work itself as they develop group relationships with one another—they seem to be having fun! This makes the class a more comfortable and enjoyable place to be, hopefully dispelling some of the anxieties and negativity that developmental students often bring to math class. In addition, there is a boost in their learning, fostered by explaining concepts to or receiving explanations from other students.

The challenge of teaching developmental math is more than a clear presentation of the material and a patient, caring attitude. Equally important are the activities which engage the students in overcoming poor attitudes and roadblocks which stand in the way of success with math.

Nancy Dorff-Pennea, *Adjunct Instructor, Mathematics*

For further information, contact the author at Palm Beach Community College, 4200 Congress Avenue, Lake Worth, FL 33461.

Using Current Events to "Jump Start" Class

On the first meeting of my money and banking course, I give students a current events assignment—for the following meeting, they are to bring in a newspaper clipping or magazine article that, in their opinion, has something to do with the subject of money and banking. This is a reasonable (and easy) assignment that usually draws little notice.

The fun starts with the next class meeting. I walk to the middle of the room, randomly choose a student, and say, "Hi, what's your name? What article have you brought for us today?" The student, trying not to look flustered, tells a little about his or her article. I tie the article to some statement I made in the last class meeting, being careful to avoid technical terms we have not studied yet. I repeat the student's name several times, trying to commit it to memory. As I put this first student at ease and help him deal with whatever topic he has chosen, other students realize that I value their contributions. I can usually develop a question about the topic for the class, and we eventually answer it. Several other students are able to participate, which gives me the chance to learn several more names.

The first article has been addressed in two to five minutes. I repeat the procedure two or three more times with different students. By now, 15 or 20 students have spoken. The students who have had their articles discussed feel a sense of meaningful contribution and ownership of the topic. Other students who have not been involved see how the process works and are put at ease.

After spending 10 to 25 percent of class time on these current articles, I find a point in the discussion that will allow me to begin to address the day's assignment. Usually one of the students has a question, or I ask, "Does anyone out there have an article on [the topic of the moment]?"

At the end of the second class period, I make the same assignment for the next class, using it to "jump-start" discussion when we meet again, calling on different students, and then moving all of them into the day's assignment. Usually by the third or fourth class meeting, students begin to volunteer to share their articles. I do not make the article assignment after the fourth class period, but the articles continue to show up at the beginning of class every day. Often, the students will be discussing an article even as I enter the room. Instead of having a formal beginning, the class just evolves as more students arrive and join the discussion.

Occasionally, I will forget to ask who has an article to share, and the students quickly remind me that they have found something of interest. Of course, by this point, I am lucky to get a word in edgewise.

In addition to generating participation by almost all students, I have found two other benefits to discussing current events at the beginning of each class. At first, I worried that I would not be able to cover all of the assigned material if I spent time on current events. However, I actually use less time on the assigned material because the subjects have often already been addressed. I often refer to our earlier discussion of an article relating the topic to a real-world situation, often making the subject matter easier for the students to grasp.

The other benefit is bringing current events into the course. The amount of time necessary for a book to move from completion to classroom means that even the newest textbook is not always up to date. Whether the subject is money and banking or Thomas Jefferson, new discoveries continue to occur.

Using a current events discussion at the beginning of each class meeting is both practical and effective. It helps promote more vigorous discussion in large classes, addresses text topics from a practitioner's point of view, and keeps instruction current with the changing times.

Jeffrey S. Harper, *Assistant Professor, Management*

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Educating the Educators: Key to Instructional Transformation

The technology explosion over the last decade has reached almost every household, but not many classrooms. Most students are taught by the same old tried-and-true teaching methods, described as paper and pencil, chalk and talk, or any number of clever euphemisms for lecture-based instruction. Educational leaders continually laud the technological progress we have made. Yet, many mathematics classrooms have seen whiteboards as the newest technology. Even though mathematical associations have developed a series of technology goals, the instructors who teach on a daily basis have only partially embraced these goals. The continuous and appropriate use of technology in mathematics classrooms is all but absent, or at best is hit or miss.

Transforming the Math Classroom

In an effort to improve the effective use of technology in the mathematics classroom, the members of the Developmental Mathematics Department at Chattanooga State Technical Community College (CSTCC) worked together to transform developmental mathematics classrooms into technology-friendly environments by requiring graphing calculators (calculators that actually draw pictures).

This effort was not accomplished overnight. Several pilot projects over the course of five years were instituted to prepare for this dramatic yet natural course of action. The first pilot project using a textbook specifically geared to the use of scientific calculators (basic calculators with more functions than the everyday variety) did not provide the intended results. Actually, test scores and success rates were significantly lower for these students when compared to the general developmental mathematics student. The project was somewhat discouraging, but the spark was lit! The developmental math faculty began to feel the excitement brewing in the mathematics classrooms of tomorrow. We knew that times were changing, and we wanted to be a part of that change.

Well, not exactly! Frankly, some of the faculty had severe reservations about calculators in general. "Can students use them on tests?" "Students will never learn the basic calculations!" "How can I teach using the calculator?" "Isn't that calculator too hard for our students?" These were but a few of the questions and comments. As department head, I heard the fear of the unknown in their comments. Most of the faculty, both full- and part-time, had finished college long before calculators were in every department store and were being given away as club membership gifts. Even I had used a slide ruler in high school.

But the age of technology is upon us, the advances in mathematics are astonishing, and the graphing calculator can now draw more pictures of lines and parabolas in a few seconds than I could in hours at the chalkboard. The question for me was not if the calculator was *too hard* for our students, but if it was *too new* for our instructors.

Fortunately for us, the dean of our division was selected as a presenter at a regional National Science Foundation (NSF) workshop for high school and college instructors on teaching with the graphing calculator. Over one-third of the developmental mathematics faculty attended this weeklong workshop during the summer break. This workshop was the turning point on the quest for using technology at the classroom level. Two faculty members who attended were later given a grant to incorporate the information gathered at the workshop at our home institution. We carefully reviewed what had happened in the previous pilot project with the scientific calculators and made these decisions about the new pilot program:

1. To use the same textbook as the other students so that the Math Center could provide consistent tutorial assistance.
2. To develop exercises for the calculator, coordinated with the present text, with explicit keystrokes for using the graphing calculator.
3. To develop a training program for all faculty—both full- and part-time.
4. To require that students purchase their own graphing calculators.
5. To require only one type of graphing calculator (we use the TI-82) for ease of instruction and effective use of classroom time.

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Transforming the Instructors

The key to change in the classroom is the instructor. To make viable and sustained change, faculty had to be comfortable teaching with this new technology. Simply put, they had to know how to use the graphing calculator. Four training workshops were organized to cover the materials developed for use in the classroom and to teach faculty how they could be used. These workshops were professionally presented, and attendance at two workshops was mandatory for any person seeking part-time teaching employment. Over 80 percent of full-time developmental math faculty served as workshop facilitators. In addition, every faculty member who attended at least two workshops was given his/her own graphing calculator. (Note: Texas Instruments has an education program which distributes TI calculators and other equipment depending on the number of students required to purchase their own calculators; other companies may have similar programs.)

As a result of our efforts, I identified some key elements for the successful implementation of graphing calculators in the developmental mathematics classroom.

1. High percentage of involvement by full-time faculty
2. Mandatory workshop attendance for part-time faculty
3. Incentives: calculators and food
4. Easy directions for using technology
5. Well-organized workshops and materials
6. Required advance registration for all workshops
7. Informing area businesses of the need for calculators in advance of fall semester
8. Holding workshops on Saturdays and evenings
9. Receiving good prices for students in area stores for calculators
10. Informing other faculty members who serve as advisors to developmental mathematics students

Impressive Results

Implementation in every classroom is not yet complete, but the groundwork is laid. Although this program of requiring graphing calculators of all developmental mathematics students is entering only its second full year, there are some unexpected outcomes from the process.

1. The faculty members who wrote the grant wrote a graphing calculator addition to our textbook.
2. Students coming out of the developmental mathematics department are able to teach some college math instructors how to use the graphing calculator more efficiently.
3. Adjunct faculty have asked for additional workshops on teaching with the graphing calculator.
4. The NSF recently funded a weeklong calculator workshop developed by developmental math faculty for area college and high school teachers at CSTCC.
5. Most faculty attended three or more workshops.
6. Students expect and demand instruction on the graphing calculators.

As we move closer toward the 21st century, technology and our technology-literate students will force most of us to change the way we teach. Each discipline and each instructor must make sensible changes in order to enhance students' educational experiences and to adequately prepare them. One of the mature faculty members who became a converted technology-user expressed the feelings of the others with this comment: "You know, if we had not started using graphing calculators when we did, we would be behind."

Anita Polk-Conley, *Graduate Student, Community College Leadership Program; on leave from her position as Developmental Mathematics Department Head, Chattanooga State Technical Community College, Tennessee.*

For further information contact the author at The University of Texas at Austin, SZB 348, Austin, TX 78712-1293.

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The Westark Experience: Orientation for a Small Price

An important component of a college enrollment management plan is improving the freshman success rate. U.S. Census data show that 80 percent of all college freshmen are first-generation, without important role models who can provide information about college or help them develop the "studenting" skills necessary in the academic environment. One critical step in preparing students for the college experience is freshman orientation.

Overview

The Westark Experience, at Westark Community College, is a low-cost orientation program for 600 first-time, full-time freshmen each fall semester. Orientation is free, and students receive one credit hour for successful completion. Billing the experience as a conference, rather than as a class, has brought greater participation and allowed for more flexibility in the structure. It is offered in two four-hour sections, each held during the week immediately preceding the beginning of regular classes. This structure, combined with its close proximity to the regular semester, has increased volunteer faculty involvement, as well.

Orientation is not mandatory, but posters, brochures, and student advisement sessions encourage participation. Its excellent reputation has contributed to the increased enrollment, as has the enticement of a free credit hour. The marketing materials are developed in-house and represent the largest budget allocation. (Making orientation mandatory for all first-time, full-time freshmen would substantially lower the need for marketing materials.)

Students receive a grade for The Westark Experience based on attendance, homework assignments, and the final exam. The goal of this program is to make students feel successful, so every effort is made to ensure that each can earn an A or B. Absences are considered an early warning of attrition, and students who are absent receive counseling about the importance of attendance, even if they only miss one 50-minute workshop. Phone calls are made immediately to students who do not arrive for that day's activities.

Structure

Each group of 25 freshmen is led by two trained student leaders. These leaders are volunteers selected through applications, faculty recommendations, and individual interviews. The orientation leader's position has been touted as an honor; each year more applications are received than positions are available. Leaders are required to attend a weekend workshop to receive training in leading discussions, team building, and promoting student success. Groups of students are identified through colored nametags that have been generated by an inexpensive software package.

Reinforcing the conference theme, each day begins with a large general session led by the student leaders. Information on various campus organizations is provided by a student representative, and the freshmen become acquainted with each other through icebreaker activities. Students then rotate through three different 50-minute workshops led by volunteer faculty and student service personnel. The day ends with a small-group discussion led by the student leaders. Throughout the day, students mix with other groups, but this special small group is only for the 25 students and their leaders. This discussion reinforces the workshops of the day, reviews feelings encountered about the different routine, and allows leaders to share some of their own college experiences with the group. Homework, consisting of readings from the catalogue, is also discussed.

Workshop offerings are based on studies of successful student courses across the nation and are designed to provide the necessary contact, as well as important information, to get students involved and prepared for the challenges of college. Offering workshops in 50-minute segments, with 10-minute breaks between each, reinforces the structure of college life. Different workshops are tailored to meet the needs of special groups of students, particularly nontraditional students and student-athletes. The Westark Experience workshops are given catchy names and cover the following topics:

- Find Your Place in the World (determining career and academic major choices)

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- The Time of Your Life (time management)
- How to Eat with a Fork Because in College You Won't be Spoon-Fed (test-taking and note-taking)
- LASSI is not a Dog (assessment of individual learning styles using The Learning And Study Strategies Indicator)
- Search for Excellence (a scavenger hunt of important places and people)
- Virtual Reality: The On-Line and On-Campus Library (library orientation)
- Stress for Success (stress management)
- Just Do It! (college survival skills for traditional students)
- You Want to Do What...? (college survival skills for nontraditional students)
- The Line King: Mastering Registration and Advisement (registration and advisement procedures)
- The ABC's of Financial Aid (financial aid application information)

The closing session is a fun and exciting time to celebrate the end of the week and the beginning of this new time in students' lives. The celebration includes the presentation of group shields that have been designed during the week and the playing of various competitive games. The president and vice-presidents serve popsicles and soft drinks, and congratulate the students on a successful week. The closing finale is a fun and inspirational slide show of the week, set to music and including every participant.

Follow-Up

One of the keys to the success of The Westark Experience is the follow-up contact note and phone call each student receives from his or her student leaders and personal advisors. The purpose of this contact is to remind the students that someone cares. The first contact, which comes within the first six weeks of the semester, reinforces concepts from the conference and encourages students during midterm exams. The second contact comes toward the end of the semester and encourages students to participate in early advisement and prepare for spring registration.

Summary

A freshman success program, offered in a conference format, offers flexibility in scheduling and efficient use of volunteers. Faculty members are recruited to lead one or two workshops, at times convenient to their schedules. The conference format also allows for tailoring different components to meet special student populations without additional cost or time. The use of volunteer student leaders develops an important link between the freshmen and the campus, and provides structure and supervision to the small groups at no additional expense.

When participating students were tracked for a period of two years, data indicated that the participating students had higher grade point averages and dropped fewer credit hours than did non-participating students. These data have helped the college obtain additional funding for scholarships and conference materials.

With declining enrollments and increasing numbers of at-risk students, community colleges must be proactive in preparing students to succeed. Orientation can be a valuable retention tool, and creative planning can keep costs low.

Beverlee McClure, *Assistant Vice President for Student Services*

For further information contact the author at Westark Community College, P. O. Box 3649, Fort Smith, AR 72913.

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A No-Frills System for Fund-Raising

"I can't operate my department on this budget!" "There is no way that copier will last another year. We have to have a new one and it's been taken out of the budget for this year." "We must have funds to send someone to the [take your pick] conference this year. We missed out on so much last year and we need to keep abreast of new developments." "If we can't provide scholarships for our band students, we'll have to close the program." Financial woes such as these are topics of conversation at almost every community college.

The 1980's provided most community colleges with increases in enrollment that helped to fund new ideas, new equipment, and new instructors. There appeared to be a wellspring of funds, and the dilemma community colleges faced was how to keep up with the demand. Well, nothing lasts forever, and these enrollment increases may have provided a false sense of financial security for many institutions. The 1990's have brought a new challenge. Flat enrollments and budget reductions are common. Budgets may be almost unrecognizable from first discussions to last. How can instructors or departments proactively work within shrinking budgets and still provide quality instruction?

Alternative Sources of Revenue

Many community colleges are turning to alternative sources of revenue—from foundation, federal, state, or local agency grants, or from individuals—to meet their financial needs. A wide variety of fund-raising alternatives should be investigated, but raising funds from private donors is an especially intriguiging pursuit.

No-Frills Fund Raising

Chattanooga State Technical Community College has had success with the "no frills" style of fund raising. This style works on a large or small scale, involves very little time, and does not have a product to be sold. No-frills was created with two main themes. First is the notion that *people will contribute to a cause if they feel it is worthy*, not because they need another widget or world-class chocolate bar. A second point is that *to raise money, one must ask someone for it*. Although this sounds elementary, it has implications that save time and expense. For instance, if people plan to contribute to a cause, why bother with a product they may not use or want? Without a product to complicate the campaign efforts, more time can be spent on developing a need statement.

A needs statement should contain specifics about what is needed, why it is needed, the amount needed, and who the beneficiaries will be. It should be well-defined and easy to communicate—e.g., "Currently, the college radio station is using equipment that was purchased when the station went 'on-the-air' in 1967. This equipment is out of date with current technology and in need of repair. For our broadcasting students to enter the workplace with superior skills and knowledge, the college will raise $20,000 to upgrade the broadcast equipment at the radio station."

Donors should be identified. Is there one group of individuals who may receive benefits from the need statement? For instance, if the need is a scholarship for an engineering student, locate a list of engineers in the area. If the need is equipment for the Physical Therapist Assistant Program, gather lists of physical therapists, physical therapy clinics, and hospitals. These lists are your prime group to "pitch," and each contact should be carefully handled.

Asking for the Contribution

So now there is a need statement and a list of donors. The next step in the "no-frills" method is to ask the donors for a contribution. This can be handled in a variety of ways. Sometimes a letter to the donors from the instructor is all that is needed. More often, it will come down to an individual asking for a contribution. This is where many campaigns go awry. Sometimes people find it difficult to ask others for money and do it half-hearted or apologetically. Or, responsibility for this task is spread among too few people, and they get bogged down. The important thing to remember here is that *the person who is asking for the contribution should be the person who will benefit from it*. In most cases at community colleges, it is not the instructor who will receive a scholarship and it is not the department that will benefit from new equipment—*it is the student*. Sometimes instructors don't feel students can ad-

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equately communicate the need to donors, but donors don't give to people, they give to *causes*. A good example of this truism is the Girl Scouts. Does anyone ever turn down a uniformed, smiling Girl Scout with a box of Do-Si-Do's? And did that little girl tactfully communicate the needs of her organization?

The final part of the campaign is also the most crucial. "Thank you" should be said many times and in many ways. Gifts are voluntary and the donors must make the decisions to give to your organization. Donors want to be appreciated for their gifts. And, there may (and probably will) be another need next year!

Paul Fuchcar, *Graduate Student, Community College Leadership Program, on leave from his position as Coordinator of Institutional Advancement at Chattanooga State Technical Community College, Tennessee.*

For further information contact the author at The University of Texas, SZB 348, Austin, TX 78712-1293.

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Keynote Sessions

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★ Wilhelmina Delco, *State Representative, 1975-1994, Texas House of Representatives*
★ Terry O'Banion, *Executive Director, League for Innovation in the Community College (CA)*

Tuesday, May 28
★ Kay McClenney, *Vice President, Education Commission of the States (CO)*

Wednesday, May 29
★ 1996 NISOD Excellence Awards Ceremony Hosted by John and Suanne Roueche, *The University of Texas of Austin*
★ Vocal Performances by Arnette Ward, *Provost, Chandler-Gilbert Community College (AZ)*

★ **For more information,** *contact Suanne Roueche, Director, NISOD, at 512/471-7545, or (512)471-9426 (fax).*

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Responding to Literature

During the first meeting of our literature-based composition class, we read aloud Guy de Maupassant's frequently anthologized short story, "The Necklace." When we finish, I instruct the students to close the book and write for seven minutes on this prompt: "Stories and poems end; life doesn't. What happens after this story ends?"

Students are told to write as fast as they can; write as much as they can; focus on content and ideas; not worry about spelling, usage, punctuation, grammar; and not erase anything. I keep time and also write. At the end of the timed writing, I allow a few moments for students to come to closure. This entire activity takes no longer than 45 minutes.

Next, I ask a few questions. Can this story have a happy ending—why or why not? Is your ending more or less satisfying than the author's—in what ways? The discussion that follows is lively, focused, insightful, and fun. Nearly all students participate the first day!

This focused free-writing demonstrates that writing equals learning, student ownership increases participation, students can learn about literature without teachers, and ideas come first. I use this first class period as a model for the others. Students are asked to repeat this process for each of the 15 short stories we read. This is not an unreasonable demand on their time: each story may take 15-30 minutes to read; the writing should take only 7-10.

Absolutely no attention should be given to the mechanics of writing in this activity. The purpose is to develop fluency; control and precision come later in the essays which are generated by these topics. I give only positive feedback, lauding students and making note of possible writing topics for future reference.

By categorizing student writing, I have developed a series of focused free-writing topics. Realizing that getting started is often the most difficult part of writing, I also provide writing prompts. I have come to believe that once the pen starts moving, the mind engages. I provide students with these suggestions.

- Respond personally. Associate the reading with something in your personal experience. Begin with, "This selection reminds me of my...".
- Build from strength. Resist the temptation to say you did not understand the selection. That will lead nowhere, except into a downward spiral of self-esteem. The words, "I think," are the only apology a writer needs. Begin with, "I think this selection is about...".
- Build from doubt. Start with the question prompt, "I wonder why...?" You will be surprised at the number of interpretive avenues that phrase will open.
- Build through comparison. "I liked and/or disliked this selection because...."
- Extend the story. Stories and poems end; life does not. What happens after the selection ends? Or, what happened before?
- Connect! Connect this story with the other works of literature we are studying in the class.
- Keep a log, a diary, or a journal about the things we are reading and discussing. Turn it in periodically for feedback.
- Draw a picture that focuses on a character, an event, a conflict, or the setting.

The grading requirements include: writing at least two-thirds of a page; turning in daily work at the start of class; and communicating what happened in the story. If the writing meets all three requirements, the grade is 100 percent. If not, the work is incomplete and subject to penalty.

This judgment-free writing creates a win-win situation. Students have the opportunity to develop fluency of thought in a non-threatening environment, can use daily work as a springboard for early success in the class (this lowers attrition rates), and develop self-esteem. I get students who are eager to participate, who have read the selections, and who create essay topics strong on content. Most important, we all have fun!

Charles McDonnell, *Instructor, English*

Piedmont Technical College, P. O. Drawer 1467, Emerald Road, Greenwood, SC 29648.

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A Student's Own Personal Injury Case

Personal Injury Law, a course in paralegal studies, provides students with credentials for employment. Students must acquire requisite knowledge of the substantive law and an understanding of the *practice* of personal injury law, as well.

In my classes, students gain knowledge of the substantive law, civil procedure, and litigation practice relating to personal injury by working through the various steps of a typical personal injury case—initial intake in a law office, investigation, stages of litigation, settlement or trial, and the enforcement of the judgment. Classroom presentations and written assignments reinforce the integration.

At the first class meeting, I circulate a news item that focuses on an event or an accident which injured an individual or individuals. For example, an article in the *Boston Globe* told of a patient dying from exposure to the cold after he wandered outside a hospital after being dropped off at the entrance. This story raised the issue (among others) of whether the estate of the deceased had a viable negligence cause of action against the hospital, and/or the firm which provided security at the hospital, for failure to look after him properly. Using this story as an example, I required each student to find a recent news item which would then become his or her own personal injury case.

Newspapers report many stories involving personal injuries—most commonly, automobile accident injuries. However, I caution students that the stories can be quite different and that they should not use stories with difficult and complex issues that cannot be examined adequately within the context of the course. Their cases must raise the issue of negligence, almost always raised in personal injury cases. I veto their use of personal injury cases in which they, or their friends or relatives, are involved.

During the course of the term, students are required to complete five written assignments using their individual cases and assuming the role of a paralegal in a law office. I offer several suggestions: identify the opposing parties in the negligence cause of action, plaintiff(s) and defendant(s); formulate a questionnaire for an intake interview with the client, either plaintiff and/or defendant (this assignment gives students the opportunity to identify any additional information that is required); plan in detail an informal investigation strategy to gather information on behalf of the plaintiff to formulate the cause of action against the defendant and/or on behalf of the defendant to develop defenses; write a memorandum, which examines and documents the factual information required to establish the elements of a negligence cause of action (which would form the basis of the plaintiff's complaint) and/or the factual information required for defenses (which would form the basis of the defendant's answer); use formal "discovery" tools permitted by the state rules of civil procedure during the course of litigation (for example, plaintiff's interrogatories to be answered by the defendant and defendant's request for production of documents to the plaintiff); write a settlement memorandum which examines the strengths and weaknesses of the case.

Working on their own personal injury cases, students tend to develop an identification with their clients. They become enthusiastic about the assignments; yet, sometimes this enthusiasm leads to problems—most notably, a tendency to be blind to the weaknesses of the client's case. This problem of attachment provides an opportunity to teach a useful lesson about the need to be detached from clients when working in a legal setting. These assignments are excellent learning opportunities to tie classroom knowledge to real-life practice.

Vijaya Samaraweera, *Adjunct Instructor, Personal Injury Law*

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The Honors Symposium

Flathead Valley Community College has a brief history of sponsoring an annual springtime Honors Symposium. Approximately 40 honors students are taken to a local resort for a two-day, overnight retreat. A guest facilitator chairs scholarly presentations, discussions, and debates on selected topics for the year's symposium.

There have always been more students interested in attending than we have had room or budget to support. Therefore, we have made a radical change in format (thanks to an idea we stole from Spokane Falls Community College). We redesigned the symposium so that more students could participate, more faculty could be involved, and community interest might be generated. The goal for our students and the community was "to expand the conversation"; our goal for faculty and staff was "to direct conversation to teaching and learning." A faculty/staff steering committee met and selected the theme for this year's symposium—Tolerance and Intolerance—and developed several approaches to embracing the community, the students, the faculty, and college staff in a grand way. We settled on four major strategies.

The Book

The committee selected a book, *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, which describes the author's experiences in Auschwitz. All instructors at the college were encouraged to read the book (copies were made available through the College Assessment Committee) and to incorporate it creatively into their courses. This paperback was adopted as a supplemental text in a number of English, speech, theatre, psychology, human services, sociology, economics, political science, humanities, music, and business management courses. There were 1200 students registered for the 49 classes. It seemed that most of our students were carrying around the same book. It stimulated spontaneous conversation about the topic and courses in which it was being incorporated and added a sense of community to our non-resident campus. Faculty were exchanging ideas of incorporating this book into their classes and sharing stories.

The Lecture Series

The steering committee organized an 11-part evening lecture series, inviting faculty to present lectures and community members to present programs. Lectures included (1) Historical Perspectives of the Holocaust, (2) Revisionist Thinking and Denying the Holocaust, (3) Social Stratification—Some Are More Equal than Others, (4) The Economic Agenda—WW II and Politics Without Economics, (5) Today's Tolerance of the Disabled, (6) Native American Issues, (7) The Use of Propaganda—World War II and Today, (8) The Hitler Youth Corps (presented by a community member who was in the Hitler Youth), (9) A Speakers Theater, (10) Gay and Lesbian Issues, and (11) An Interactive Art Project.

The Film Festival

A month-long film festival was organized with facilitators leading discussions before and after the films. Films included *Inherit the Wind*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Juden Suiss* (a German propaganda film), *Schindler's List*, *Children's Hour*, *Straight from the Heart*, and *Incident at Ogalala*.

The Mini-Conference

A day-long conference was organized. Five activities were in progress simultaneously. There were guest lectures on racism and sexism, multicultural issues, World War II perspectives (from a former prisoner of war), and intolerance toward people with disabilities. There were videos about the holocaust and intolerance: *The Democrat and the Dictator*, *The Propaganda Battle*, *The Wave*, *Nazi Designers of Death*, *A Time for Justice*, and *Diamonds in the Snow*. There were art and music presentations; original songs were composed and performed by students and faculty. The Simon Wisenthal Poster Series titled "The Courage to Remember," depicting the tragedy and horror of the holocaust, was on display on campus for two weeks. Students read papers they had written for the various courses which used the book. And there were refreshments—donated pies, cheesecakes, coffees, cheese, fruit and vegetable trays—as

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well as an Auschwitz dinner, complete with potato peel soup and hard, dry bread. Students were given nametags which symbolized their concentration camp classification—for example, Jews, homosexuals, gypsies, immigrants, the mentally ill, and others.

We created two credit-bearing classes with the Honors Symposium activities in mind. A one-credit class required documented attendance at 20 hours of scheduled activities and a paper. A two-credit course required 45 hours of activities, service on steering and planning committees, and hosting duties for the conference, film-festival and lecture series. A seminar discussion group also met during the semester.

Students from the various college classes participated in the mini-conference activities, as did students from the local junior high school. Although we did not advertise in the community because space was limited on campus, community members began attending events and bringing their friends. The local newspaper highlighted the Tolerance and Intolerance Honors Symposium, as did the local TV station. Every event was well received.

The conversation expanded—a lot. Faculty and staff began visiting about teaching and learning, the community discovered that relevant issues were being addressed at the college, and the students were exposed to a topic that cut across many disciplines. We plan to repeat the symposium annually, varying the themes and constantly improving the format.

Ivan Lorentzen, *Instructor, Psychology*

For further information, contact the author at Flathead Valley Community College, 777 Grandview Drive, Kalispell, MT 59901.

Linking Disciplines: The Varied Topic Approach

A Humanities Seminar has alleviated much of the dreaded routine our faculty often encounter in preparing for yet another semester of teaching the same courses and has added another facet to the study of the humanities for our students. This seminar is always team-taught by three faculty members from various disciplines, addressing varied topics.

We have taught the music, history, and literature of the 1920s; the art and music, history, and literature of the Beat Generation; and The Age of Reason, integrating the disciplines of art, literature, and science. Several dates throughout the semester are designated for lecture and discussion, and the meetings are open to all students and faculty on campus. At a recent meeting, a member of the science faculty discussed the impact of the dissection of cadavers on artists' knowledge of the human body as revealed through their work.

Students repeatedly ask about the next seminar topic and make suggestions for topics. Enrollment in the seminar is always substantial. The spring 1996 topic is "To be American." In light of the bombing in Oklahoma City, we decided that this would be an appropriate time for our community to contemplate what it means to be an American. The seminar will focus on the disciplines of literature, history, and speech. For the final exam, students will participate in a panel discussion, open to all students and faculty, on "What it Means to be American."

Interdisciplinary team teaching is exciting. While we have offered the team approach before, using blocks of courses and back-to-back sections of history and English, we find that offering a new topic each semester encourages diversity in our faculty and continuously sparks the interest and enthusiasm of our students.

Dee Frassetto, *Department Head, Humanities*

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Those Who Can...Teach

Introductory public speaking courses are difficult for most students because speaking in front of a group produces anxiety and organizing material to be spoken requires learning a new approach to sharing ideas. Moreover, students have few models of appropriate speech behavior; most public-speaking students have seen only well-coached professionals on television or after-banquet amateurs who defy all the textbook rules of good public speaking.

We decided to develop a speech exchange program in which we develop our own speeches and model the behavior we desire from our students. We begin developing our speeches when we make the assignment to our students. We gather research, organize the material, and rehearse the speech following the same timeline we have assigned the class. In the week before the student speeches begin, we visit each other's classrooms and present our speeches to the students. Students have the benefit of seeing two speech instructors "practicing what they preach."

This program helps us address the problems that make a public speaking course so difficult for students:

1) Viewing instructors' speeches before giving their own allows students to preview what is expected (speeches that we perform are delivered at the introductory course level), thus removing some of the "unknown." Some studies indicate that observing a model of the intended behavior can decrease apprehension by as much as 50 percent.

2) Listening to these model speeches enables students to grasp the importance of the repetitive organizational techniques that speech delivery requires. If students see that the style works for the teacher—that a preview of the main positions alerts listeners to the main points of the speech, or that visual aids can enhance audience understanding and attention—they are more likely to adopt that style.

3) Students are able to see that we, as instructors, are serious enough to try to improve our speaking abilities by delivering these speeches and receiving student feedback. They see that we go through the same efforts as they do in preparing for a speech and are open to constructive criticism.

Our teacher exchange technique has wide-ranging classroom applications. Teachers of English composition, for example, may compose a sample argumentative essay and share it with colleagues' students. Social scientists may guest lecture in another classroom, adding new perspective and expertise to a particular subject. Mathematicians may share their techniques for solving problems with students in other math classes.

Exposure to different individual teaching/speaking styles helps students see that there is more than one way to approach a subject, paper, speech, lecture, algebra problem, etc. This exposure prepares them to respond more successfully to a diversity of teaching methods and leadership styles.

Observing their instructors' works-in-progress allows students to see all those who teach in a new light: If the adage, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach" rings true for them, seeing their professors "do" reveals them to be competent professionals who emphasize the importance of intellectual growth. Ultimately, we are modeling not only mastery of our subject matter, but also our commitment to learning as a lifelong process.

Jimmie D. Bruce, Jr., *Associate Professor, Communication*

Katrina M. Eicher, *Assistant Professor, Communication and Theatre*

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Nontraditional Collaborations for Teaching Composition

Many traditional writing activities are included in my composition class, but at the beginning of the course when we are focusing on the form and structure of the essay, my students participate in more nontraditional, collaborative activities. Three of these activities generate particularly dynamic responses.

* * *

Reconstructing the whole essay from its structural components. Each student in the class is assigned a number (1-3); I select three essays and assign a different essay to each of the three groups. Students are to read and analyze the structural components of their assigned essay, make flashcards of all the structural components that would be included in a full outline of the entire essay (such as thesis statement, plan points, topic sentences, support phrases, etc.), and bring them to class.

The next class day, I place three velcro boards on the wall and an empty box in front of each. Three students who have been assigned the number one each step up to a different empty box and place his or her flashcards in the box. Students assigned the numbers two and three do the same. Then each box has a mix of the structural components of three different essays, and I ask for three pairs of student volunteers to play a game. The game is to construct the three essays on the velcro board from a random selection of their structural components. The student pair who constructs the essays first wins. This activity develops organizational thinking skills and creates class excitement and learning fun.

Co-authoring an essay. I ask half of the students to construct one thesis statement (without plan points or preview), making a copy for himself or herself and a copy for another student in the class. When all students have a constructed thesis in hand, they are to write a preliminary draft of an essay using that thesis. I collect the drafts at the end of the class period, pass them back the next, and then pair the students (with essays on the same thesis) for a class reading. Each student in the pair then reads the preliminary draft of the essay he or she wrote. The class is instructed to ask questions and make comments about the commonalities and differences noted in each essay. The student pairs swap preliminary drafts, and then edit, proof and hand in that essay the next class day as a co-author. These co-authored essays are then evaluated by their peers.

Creating an artistic collage to recreate an essay. Students bring colored composition paper to class and work in pairs to make a collage of a specific essay reading. During the following class period, students write an essay reconstructing the collage as a written essay. The written essays are then compared to the original from which the collage was created.

* * *

The activities of reconstructing the whole essay from its structural components, co-authoring an essay, and creating an artistic collage to recreate an essay serve to create a dynamic and fun learning environment.

Rose Haroian, *Assistant Professor, English*

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Designing Content-Related Classroom Humor

Early institutions of higher education, a product of the Middle Ages, regarded humor as unscholarly—laughter and humor were considered frivolous activities that distracted from what was important. However, studies show classroom humor increases student attentiveness, decreases class monotony, and leads to superior retention of material. As a college chemistry professor for 25 years, I have tried to combine unique humor with subject matter. Although all of the following examples are related to chemistry, they should be applicable to other disciplines.

• *Using props teaches chemistry and promotes humor.* Referring to myself as the "Amazing Thallinski," I bring ordinary playing cards to class to introduce entropy (disorder). What is my talent? Select a number from 1 to 52, and I can identify the card from the top of the deck. Of course, cards are methodically arranged from ace to king by spades, clubs, hearts, and diamonds. Students complain that the deck is rigged and call me a fake. I respond that my expertise resides not in the ability to memorize the order of 52 randomly distributed cards, but in bestowing to the system an extremely low entropy. With a quick shuffle of the deck, the system's entropy increases, and my amazing ability vanishes.

• *Amusing anecdotes not only entertain, they help students remember important contributors.* The work of Gay-Lussaac on the thermal expansion of gases established what is known as Charles' Law. A student is certain to ask, "Then why is it called Charles' Law?" I respond that Gay-Lussac already determined the law of combining volumes, and not wishing to confuse freshmen with more than one law bearing his name, he conferred the honor on Charles, a fellow hot-air balloonist.

• *Anecdotes can be factual and humorous.* Arrenhius, credited for the first acid-base theory, was disappointed when his dissertation received a fourth-class rating from his professors. Ironically, the same work earned him the Nobel prize in chemistry. The anecdote garners compassion for the famous scientist and demonstrates that professors can make mistakes.

• *Content can be related to memorable experiences.* The study of atmospheric pressure affords me the opportunity to recall the lowest pressure ever recorded in northeast Ohio. While driving to a Friday morning class in January 1978, I heard the radio warn of the approaching "storm of the century." Realizing storms with this billing do not come every year, I wisely turned around and headed for home. Blinding snow, 70-mile-per-hour wind, a 30-degree drop in temperature in matter of minutes, and the lowest pressure ever recorded at the Akron-Canton airport soon greeted the region. Students enjoy the footnote to the narrative: The brave souls who arrived that morning for class at our rural Orrville campus were stranded for most of the weekend!

• *Colorful expressions communicate special significance.* As a novice instructor, I often warned students to pay attention because "This is important!" Later, when grading exams, I wondered why some students did not heed the advice. A few years of seasoning taught me to announce, "This will be on the next exam!" Although the words cause heads to pop up, notebooks to open, and pencils to get sharpened, the magic works only a finite number of times during the 15-week semester.

On the momentous occasion of presenting enantiomers (mirror image molecules), I say, "You are about to eat from the tree of knowledge and shortly will lose your innocence." Before introducing carbocations (carbon with a positive charge), I tell students to record the time and date for posterity. Knowing that errors result from temperature calculations, I say, "Never use the Celsius scale, but this warning won't stop some of you!"

Exercise caution when using vivid portrayals. For example, in a nucleophilic substitution, a weak base such as the bromide ion is replaced by a stronger base (the nucleophile). To emphasize the driving force behind this reaction, I once referred to the bromide ion as a charter member of the "Leaving Group Hall of Fame." On the subsequent exam, one answer cited affiliation of the bromide ion with this bogus organization.

• *Analogies transform abstract concepts into more familiar examples.* Consider an aspect of LeChatelier's Principle: Increasing the temperature causes equilibrium to shift in the direction (reactant or product) of

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higher potential energy. The following analogy illustrated how addition of the same entity can benefit one recipient more than the other: An extremely wealthy person (allow students to select) and I jointly win the $100 million Ohio Super Lottery. While each of us gains $50 million, I stand to benefit more. The wealthy person will not alter his or her lifestyle, but I undoubtedly will move to a larger house, buy a fancy car, and opt for early retirement.

Well-known analogies are easily modified to include humor. For example, chemistry textbooks often compare resonance theory (molecules viewed as hybrids of two or more forms) to a mule; it is not a horse part of the time and a donkey part of the time. To modify this popular analogy, I cross a greyhound with a bloodhound. The offspring is a blend of both parents—it does not race at the track by day as a greyhound and then sniff out criminals at night as a bloodhound.

• *Although the chemistry laboratory exemplifies a setting for disciplined behavior, inclusion of humor need not sacrifice safety.* In 20-minute pre-lab sessions, procedures are reviewed. Demonstrating the proper use of a pipet with rubber bulb brings a smile. As an undergraduate, I was instructed to suck liquid into the pipet by mouth. The archaic practice astonishes contemporary students. However, I assure students that safety really was a concern 35 years ago—instructors warned us not to get any liquid in our mouths, especially sodium hydroxide (lye) solution!

After performing a specific experiment, students are instructed to place recovered silver in a jar labeled "Silver: Dr. Thall's Retirement Fund." With retirement a few years away, I explain how the precious metal will help me through the golden years. Some students see humor in the situation but are hesitant to laugh—everyone knows retirement is serious business. Then a quick calculation reveals the entire class will generate silver worth less than $4. Former students remember this episode and inquire about the "nest egg."

• *Textbooks are generally quite somber, but when a chemistry book contains a dash of humor read the excerpt in class.* For example, *Organic Chemistry* (Morrison and Boyd) introduces alcohols with the following passage:

> If allowed to choose ten compounds with which to be stranded on a desert island, you would almost certainly pick alcohols. From them you could make nearly every other kind of aliphatic compound. On your desert island you would use your alcohols not only as raw materials, but frequently as solvents in which reactions are carried out and from which products are recrystallized. Finally, hot and tired after a long day in the laboratory, you could refresh yourself with an (isopropyl) alcohol rub and perhaps relax over a cool (ethyl) alcoholic drink.

* * *

I will use humor several times in a typical 75-minute class session. Besides making class more enjoyable, humor provides valuable feedback for the instructor—*students do not laugh unless they are paying attention.* And when instructors use humor, students often feel comfortable enough to try some of it themselves. For example, techniques for DNA testing were described in conjunction with the chapter on nucleic acids. Undoubtedly due to a highly publicized trial, the issue was raised regarding the jurors' competency to evaluate DNA evidence. So when I mentioned that qualified professionals such as physicians and science teachers can avoid jury duty and that when summoned a few years ago I pleaded hardship and was excused, one student vehemently insisted that it was my obligation as a citizen to serve, especially if called in the very near future.

And, finally, after studying the chemistry of the three major food classes, and everyone preparing a healthy dish for a special lab session, one student inquired about my dish, kasha, a grain high in fiber/protein and popular in eastern European countries, "How many bowls of this stuff do I need to eat to get an A?"

Edwin Thall, *Professor, Chemistry*

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Using NISOD To Promote Quality Teaching and Learning

Recognizing excellence requires reinforcement if a community college truly intends to promote quality teaching and learning. Recognition may range from a simple administrative "thank you" to a national showcase such as NISOD's Teaching Excellence Award. Excellent teachers and quality teaching and learning are often difficult to define, but are easily recognized by students, administrators, and peers. North Shore Community College has used NISOD services to develop a new sense of quality teaching and learning. Three important benefits of NISOD membership are shared here.

Recognition of Excellence

When North Shore Community College joined NISOD in 1993, we selected ten outstanding teachers for special recognition. We sent seven of those teachers, plus the dean of academic affairs, to Austin, Texas, for NISOD's International Conference on Teaching Excellence. This is where our institutional recognition of quality teaching and learning really began. This recognition occurred as a result of three factors: the conference, the Teaching Excellence Awards, and the team that went as a group. (This team was able to support each other in this setting in ways not possible at our multi-campus college.) From this group experience came a new appreciation for teaching excellence at our college and a common bond of experiences. How can you not remember the emotional moment in the conference when your administrator puts the ribbon and medallion around your neck as a symbol of your teaching excellence? If the college had sent only one recipient, without an administrator, the effect would have been very different. Quality teaching/learning would not have become part of our college's climate; we would have seen only the acknowledgment of an individual.

Innovation Abstracts

Innovation Abstracts is another benefit of NISOD membership. All full-time and part-time faculty/staff receive an individual copy in their mailboxes. For about a year, we did not know if this weekly publication was making a difference. Then we began to host lunches on campus to talk about quality teaching and learning. In the discussions, it became apparent that faculty not only read *Innovation Abstracts*, but tried some of the instructional techniques they read about. There are many other publications available for similar purposes, but they are not written by community college teachers. In *Innovation Abstracts*, community college faculty from all over the United States and Canada share their innovations and reinforce the special importance of college teaching and learning. Our faculty who have used ideas from *Innovation Abstracts* in their classrooms say they have been effective developmental experiences for them and have provided important teaching and learning innovations for their students. We can never encourage too much discussion about teaching and learning because our changing student population continues to give us new challenges. The discussions of how we can become more effective will always be new and vibrant.

Synergy

The third benefit has come as a result of the group process that began at the first NISOD conference we attended. The synergy that developed within that group was brought back to the campus. Participants wanted to be together again as a group. The assistant dean of enrollment management was one of those participants. An opportunity arose two years later for the college to grant a one-course release for six faculty to work with the assistant dean for a semester on projects involving recruitment and retention. Because she had attended the conference, this dean chose six NISOD award-winning faculty to pilot this new faculty-administration team project. The six faculty came from different academic disciplines and different campus locations, and had won awards in different years. Each was asked to choose a meaningful project of his/her own design. Four chose projects in recruitment, and two chose to work together on retention. Some worked on new state welfare opportunities and how our college could respond to them. Two others worked with local high schools; one brought current college students to the high schools to talk about the college honors program. The other visited classrooms and encountered a large

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group of students who had never considered going to college before her visit. She found that until students can view themselves as "college material" they will not access either high school or college resources.

Other faculty in the "'95 NISOD" group brainstormed for ideas that would encourage greater faculty involvement in the life of the college. Another faculty member worked with local businesses and reshaped a certificate program that working professionals could complete in eight months. Although not part of the original plan, the six faculty and the assistant dean met as a group throughout the semester, building on each other's ideas and energies. The total group spent several meetings examining issues that related to student success, persistence, and retention.

The results of this pilot project far exceeded the initial design. Each of the participants completed a project that had personal/professional value, not only to that individual but to the college as well. In addition, the group became a forum for faculty-administration dialogue about issues pertaining to teaching and learning. It became an opportunity to build community and cooperation.

In keeping with the NISOD tradition of recognizing excellence, at the conclusion of the semester each of the faculty participants received a personal letter of thanks from the college president, highlighting their achievements and contributions to the group. The project, now in its second year, retained two of the group's original members and added four other NISOD Excellence Award recipients.

Conclusion

NISOD has had major effects on NSCC. The benefits of our NISOD membership as described here may be helpful to other colleges looking for ways to promote teaching and learning excellence. Our institutional acknowledgment of this excellence has been used to demonstrate our continuing commitment, in word and deed, to the value of quality teaching and learning as described in our college's mission.

Cheryl Finkelstein, *Dean of Enrollment Management and Student Development*

Thomas Wisbey, *Division Chairperson of Human Services*

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The Dialogue Disk

In his prognosticative book about the future of the information highway, *The Road Ahead*, Bill Gates says, "College students everywhere already understand the joys of e-mail" (p. 201). Unfortunately, however, some college students do not have access to electronic mail and, therefore, cannot take advantage of the many benefits to be realized from engaging in on-line dialogue with instructors and peers. It is possible, nonetheless, to move toward computer-mediated communication in the absence of networked computers and e-mail. If a sufficient number of computers with compatible word processing software are available on campus for students to use on a regular basis, they can enjoy most of the benefits of asynchronous e-mail through what I refer to as the "dialogue disk."

It works like this. Students in the same class, or in different sections of a class, are placed into five- or six-member groups. Each group is given a formatted floppy disk to be kept in a central location, preferably a computer lab, where the disk can be readily accessed by all group members. A written prompt on each disk is used to get the dialogue started. The following is an example of a prompt I have used in a literature class.

> Since we will spend most of the time in class this week talking about Oedipus, let's use this time and space to discuss the character of Jocasta, his wife. In tragedy, most of the focus is placed on the tragic hero; however, as Donne said, "No [hu]man is an island." Oedipus' search for the truth and his ultimate downfall certainly affects others, particularly his wife. Put yourself in Jocasta's place; attempt to explain how you would feel if you were in her position.

This prompt points to several instructional advantages inherent in using computer-mediated communication, perhaps the most important of which is the additional out-of-class time students spend engaging in dialogue about topics being discussed in class. Essentially, the benefits derived from small group collaboration among students in class are retained—without using valuable class time and without requiring students with different schedules to arrange for out-of-class meetings.

Another advantage is that all students are given an equal opportunity to think about and express their opinions, which is not always the case in large or small group discussions. One of the most compelling claims that has been made for computer-mediated communication is that the written exchanges of discourse that occur on computers may promote more egalitarian interaction in the dialogue that takes place among participants. All students, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, physical appearance, or socio-economic status can contribute equally to the conversation that occurs on the computer because affective characteristics are masked, particularly in an anonymous exchange. The hope is that students outside the mainstream who find it difficult to contribute equally in face-to-face discussions will lose whatever disadvantage they have when interacting on a computer network. The dialogue disk provides the same platform for anonymous, egalitarian discourse as e-mail, bulletin boards, and other forms of computer-mediated communication.

Students also tend to focus more fully on the content of the conversation, rather than the speaker, when they engage in computer-mediated communication. And off-task interaction, in general, is reduced. In a study comparing computer-mediated and face-to-face communication in small groups, I found that 71 percent of all off-task interaction—both verbal and non-verbal communication that was extraneous or tangential to fulfillment of the assigned task—occurred in face-to-face groups. When interacting on a dialogue disk or e-mail, students exchange ideas quickly and concisely, which yields greater communication efficiency.

There are any number of variations and modifications one can adopt in using the dialogue disk. I give students a prompt at the beginning of each week and require at least three anonymous entries by week's end. Anonymity is achieved through the use of numbers for identification. The first entry is in response to my prompt, and later entries are responses to what other group members have said. The prompt I provide suggests a topic for discussion, usually based on assigned readings for that week. Students are asked to respond at length to the prompt, raising as many related or unrelated issues as they choose. After

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members of the group complete this initial response, they read the entries of their peers; then the real dialogue begins. I encourage them to debate ideas and to support their statements with evidence. The following exchange was in response to the earlier prompt.

> 5421—Being a moral person, I would have been so shamed by these events that I feel I would have taken my life, also. I cannot imagine sleeping with my son, even unknowingly, and then having his children and facing them. I probably would have poisoned my children with me so they wouldn't have to live this legacy of shame and disgrace.
>
> 8694—Jocasta took the easy way out by killing herself. As punishment for trying to kill and dispose of him at birth, she should have had to face and share the disgrace and shame with Oedipus, knowing he was her own son. Jocasta's guilt was very heavy and should have been.
>
> 9577—I have to agree with 8694 when s/he says that Jocasta's guilt must have been very heavy. It is obvious how unbearable it must have been for her because, after all, she did take her own life. However, I disagree with 5421—I certainly would not have poisoned my children. The actions of Jocasta and Oedipus were not the children's fault. They were probably the only innocent ones through it all. They shouldn't be punished or have their lives taken away from them just because of the actions of their mother and father.

Although I have found the dialogue disk particularly effective in composition and literature classes because it offers an additional format for thinking and writing, faculty in other disciplines have also successfully utilized dialogue disks in their classes. A colleague who teaches sociology gives a one- or two-sentence statement related to a reading from the text as a prompt. For example, while studying a chapter on socialization, he asks students, "What is an appropriate parenting style?" And while studying social interaction, he prompts students to comment on how AIDS has affected them. Because his classes are typically large (50-70 students), assembling small, face-to-face groups in class is unwieldy and unproductive, but the dialogue disk has enabled him to achieve the learning benefits of small groups in a large class setting. Now, he says, everyone gets a chance to speak.

A political science professor who employs the dialogue disk in her classes has found that students are more willing to state their opinions openly through computer-mediated discourse than they are in face-to-face groups, so she uses the dialogue disk to promote candid discussion among her students. She has found that students enjoy the anonymity and the reduced inhibition, and that they often broaden their views after participating in focused dialogue with others who hold diverse opinions.

At the end of each semester, students who participate in dialogue disk groups complete a questionnaire. Most say that small group discussion on the computer increased their understanding of topics or issues being discussed in class. One student stated: "Each of us had a different perspective or idea concerning the literature we discussed. In effect, we drew each other's attention to things we otherwise might not have seen and were able to use these insights when it came time to write our papers."

Making the transition from using the dialogue disk to electronic mail for computer-mediated communication is easy. Once prompts have been designed on the basis of course content, shifting from disk-based to network-based communication is simply a matter of changing where the prompt is entered and how written conversations are retrieved. Instead of entering and saving all discourse on the floppy disk, e-mail accounts are established, and communication occurs strictly online. Therefore, the dialogue disk is an excellent precursor to e-mail for students and instructors alike.

Although there are faculty who still resist the use of computers and other instructional technologies as tools for teaching and learning, and those who believe that the extended use of computers, even for communication, will isolate human beings, I think Bill Gates is correct to allay this fear. "In some of the world's most creative classrooms, computers and communications networks are already beginning to change the conventional relationships among students themselves, and between students and teachers, by facilitating collaborative learning" (p. 200). The dialogue disk is one way in which relationships among students and teachers can be strengthened through meaningful, focused discourse that expands the learning experience for all participants.

Debbie L. Sydow, *Associate Professor of English, and Dean of Academic and Student Services*

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Student-Centered Composition

Recently, as I strolled along the halls of a large university while classes were in session, I looked into the classrooms. Each offered a similar layout: The instructor spoke into a microphone while lecture notes were projected on a bright screen. The students sat on concentric tiers, appearing to copy the information that appeared on the screen 40 feet away. In my 20 minutes of observation, I heard one instructor ask one question of his whole group. No one answered. These classrooms were very unlike those in which I teach writing. Similarly, the instructor's role—that of a lecturer, far removed from the students, for the most part engaged in one-way communication—was very dissimilar to mine.

What occurred to me then was that some people—certainly the observed students, many instructors, some administrators, and individuals outside the institution—have had this experience with higher education and might assume that this image of a college classroom as a lecture hall is always accurate. What I discuss here is a different classroom arrangement. Many community college writing classrooms today incorporate some or all of the following features.

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The instruction is student-centered. All writing teachers assign readings and thoughtfully schedule developmental activities; we invite student participation. We encourage first-person essays, creativity in topic choice, and flexibility in approaches and schedules. We are never absolutely sure just what we will cover in a particular class; students' shared insights might alter our scheduled activities and our approach to a writing assignment. In fact, the students and teachers—through collaboration and open discussion—develop (or at least modify) curriculum daily.

The class is conducted informally. All writing teachers I know incorporate some fundamental classroom rules intended to enhance discussion and production. Most soon learn their students' names, sit with them to help a peer group review their essay drafts, and move around the room often, coaching the writers by offering individual encouragement or suggestions. All students are on "company time" for three hours a week, engaged in a productive writing process. As the teacher visits with each student, s/he nimbly shifts from individual context to context, sensitively adjusting critical comments to fit each student's profile. Thus, the lecture in the large university example is transposed into a series of short, personally directed comments, all of which allow for student response. Whereas the university lecturer might deliver five pages of single-spaced prose during an hour, so does the community college writing teacher. However, the latter's five pages are broken up into many shorter, individually tailored utterances, open to student modification.

Evaluation methods go beyond testing. Most writing instructors feel obligated to emphasize *writing* in class. This emphasis on results is a pleasing agreement with the catalog description, as well as a professionally enlightened and occupationally helpful (for the students) direction for instruction. Evaluation and assessment occur daily as the teacher—commenting on drafts, answering student questions, encouraging collaboration, giving feedback, and grading papers—remains in constant social and verbal contact with the students. There is very little of a "Your grade is one-half the mid-term, one-half the final" evaluation system left in contemporary writing classrooms; instead, evaluation occurs much more often, but in much smaller doses.

The class is held as a workshop. In the main, teachers know that "writing" is really "revising," and they want a classroom and the technology that will facilitate this process. For most of us, the classroom of choice is something like my own. I have 15 Macintosh computers around the periphery, several tables and a laser printer in the middle. Students develop their papers through a process that includes brainstorming or clustering, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The teacher is present—sort of an educational midwife—from creation to birth.

Many community college writing classes and their instructors are quite different from those lecture hall situations I recently witnessed. We have incorporated these characteristics as a result of the pioneering scholarship of Peter Elbow, Donald Graves, James Moffett, and others. Their work has made us think

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about how best to facilitate student learning and growing in the writing classroom, even as we leave historical and popular paradigms behind. Certainly, as writing teachers today, we act somewhere between John Houseman, the unsmiling professor in *The Paper Chase*, and Robin Williams, the teacher who frenetically jumps onto desks in *Dead Poets Society*. Rather, the contemporary writing classroom, a student-centered, informal writing workshop, challenges tradition, conformity, and popular expectations to try to achieve a higher level of student literacy.

Ed Hara, *Instructor, Composition*

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Terminating With Care

About a month prior to each graduation there is a restless change in our senior nursing students. "Senioritis" affects students in a variety of ways. Some become lax with their assignments; others panic that they will not be able to accomplish all their goals. Friendships that once flourished between students teeter on the brink of dissolving as petty arguments erupt. Students who frequently sought out a favorite instructor now barely acknowledge her existence. When asked if they have sent in applications for jobs and licensing exams, they often answer, "I haven't gotten around to it yet."

Recognizing these stalling behaviors as part of the grief process (in anticipation of the loss of the student role), the faculty has decided to treat the students as we would treat patients who are grieving over an anticipated loss. We schedule a special meeting and invite the students to join us in talking about termination.

This special meeting is held in a large classroom; faculty members disperse among the students, and we all stand in one large circle. We pass around rolls of toilet tissue and instruct students to tear off enough to blow their noses. The sentimental ones are sure they are going to cry and take a generous wad. Then one of the faculty begins the ice-breaker exercise; in round-robin fashion, each person takes a turn tearing off the individual squares of toilet paper and simultaneously making a remark as each square is ceremoniously thrown into the center of the circle. The shy students cringe at the idea of speaking in public; but as the session progresses, everyone gets caught up in the desire to express feelings of relief, sadness, or gratitude; tell a funny story; or use the tissue for tears. There is rapt attention as each person speaks, and then there is applause.

With a little encouragement, the students verbalize their anxieties about leaving their friends and the security of the learning environment. Even with good intentions of keeping in touch with their classmates, they realize it will never be the same again after graduation. They talk about their fears of not getting a job and their fears about beginning a job. They realize their procrastination is a way of avoiding the inevitable, serving as a denial of their program completion and a bargaining for more time. Their anger is expressed as petty arguments and troubled friendships. As they work through this grieving process, all are relieved that they were given the opportunity to express their feelings in a caring environment.

At the final faculty meeting of the year, instructors and secretaries are given several cards and asked to write short messages appropriate for any student, such as, "Congratulations, you made it!!" "We'll miss you sooo much!!" "We're proud to say you're a BCC grad!!" The cards are signed, "From the BCC nursing faculty." The cards are given to the students at the termination session as bookmark mementos from the faculty. Each card is adorned with a sticker. One year the stickers were butterflies to symbolize graduation as a new beginning. Another year they were teddy bears, reminding us of the Care Bear theme that symbolized our earlier adoption of a "caring" curriculum.

The termination sessions we share meet both faculty and students' needs for saying good-bye. Endings are difficult, but these experiences have made "parting is such sweet sorrow" come alive.

Barbara B. Marckx, *Professor, Nursing*

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Using the World Wide Web, E-mail, and Campus Network to Enrich Classes and Academic Support Services

At Gainesville College, all personal computers are connected to GCNet, the campus computer network, and the Internet. Approximately 500 PCs serve a student body of 2,800 and a full-time faculty of 90. The campus network, the college World Wide Web site, E-mail, and the Internet enrich classes and significantly contribute to academic support services.

Using Netscape and the college Web site, faculty and students locate educational resources throughout the world. Faculty use class Web pages to present Internet resources to a particular class on a particular topic. For example, foreign language faculty have been especially eager to take advantage of the international exposure and language practice available to students on the Internet. And, there is tremendous interest and activity in Web publication by both faculty and students.

Campuswide network access has changed the structure of many courses. Students now check their E-mail, the World Wide Web class page, or the publicly accessible, networked G drive for class syllabi, handouts, assignments, office hours, phone numbers, faculty and student E-mail addresses, and Internet-related class resources. E-mail is used as an integral part of courses (presenting/submitting assignments, facilitating group projects) in addition to routine student/teacher contacts and class announcements. All students, faculty, and staff have E-mail accounts.

As part of the log-on process to check E-mail, the student notice (bulletin) board pops messages onto student monitors. It is a valuable means of publicizing events. A locally developed screen saver (floating text boxes) announces upcoming theater events, concerts, guest lecturers, club activities, etc. A faculty version of this notice board is on another file server. On an average day, faculty members might browse through four or five campus announcements as they log on to their computers.

During pre-registration, students and advisors may use the registrar's Web page to look for classes as they design schedules and then use the campus network's Student Registration Program to register. The main access point for students outside of class is the Academic Computing, Tutoring and Testing (ACTT) Center that houses 110 recent vintage computers, one large concentration of computers, and three computer classrooms.

Several hundred programs are available in the Center and on all student-accessible computers on campus; they are an increasingly vital part of academic support services. In the Center, nine professional tutors (six full-time, three part-time) and six to eight peer tutors staff learning labs in writing, math, business, speech, and foreign languages. Some assistance is offered, either on the computers or personally, in almost every subject taught at the college. Tutors for each learning lab may be contacted, appointments made, and questions directed through the E-mail feature of each learning lab Web page. Tutors also assist students in effectively using the vast educational resources available both on the campus network and the Internet.

The three computer classrooms in the Center are used for faculty and staff technology workshops when not scheduled for regular classes. Workshops are announced via the faculty/staff computer notice board. Workshop instructors are staff and faculty who volunteer to share particular computing expertise.

Using these technological resources is an on-going project, a journey with no end in sight. Thus far, the experience has been exhausting, but exhilarating. The challenge now is to maintain, even raise, this level of enthusiasm.

Byron Drew, *Instructor, Business*

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Celebrating Success: The Ceremonial Speech

One of the most rewarding aspects of teaching Effective (Public) Speaking has been watching students develop poise and confidence. To celebrate a successful semester, I assign a "ceremonial" speech in lieu of a final exam. While difficult to prepare, it provides memorable closure to an exciting and sometimes nerve-wracking course.

Throughout the quarter, students evaluate each other, taking careful notes of improvements, outstanding speeches, special skills, etc. About two weeks prior to the final exam dates, I ask students to nominate at least five students for different awards. Although I give them some ideas, such as "Best Informative Speech," "Most Moving Speech," "Most Consistent Speaker," and "Most Improved Speaker," I allow them to generate their own award titles that are well-suited to the recipients. I assign each student an award to present and encourage them to keep their selections secret. I make sure each student receives a unique award (no duplicate "Most Improved Speaker"). Students are encouraged to dress up for the ceremony, bring food/soft drinks for a reception afterward, and invite guests to both.

At the ceremony, I welcome everyone and give the opening remarks, congratulate students on their successes in class, and turn the podium over to the first presenter. Everyone gives and receives an award (students are graded 75% on presentation and 35% on acceptance).

Grades become secondary to the emotional and joyful celebration of success. Some students have never won an award and are overwhelmed that a classmate thought so highly of them. This is especially true of the nontraditional students who have to juggle family, work, and class schedules to be in school at all. I continually hear from my students that the class and the awards ceremony, in particular, have helped them develop new levels of confidence and self-esteem.

Kathleen Colligan Cleary, *Coordinator, Performing Arts Program*

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Exercise and English: Taking Charge in the Classroom

"Holy cow! What is all this? I thought I signed up for English, not P.E.!" This is a typical first reaction to my class when I begin with a few physical exercises to 1) integrate the right and left sides of the brain for a whole-brained, whole-body approach to learning; and 2) reduce student stress and anxiety. From day one, I have my students' attention; they become engaged immediately in class participation.

Mental and physical fitness are connected, and it is important to engage both sides of the brain for healthy reading, writing, and communicating experiences. Most of us use one side of our brain more than the other; that is, we usually are either more logical or more creative. These exercises (selected from Paul and Gail Dennison's *Brain Gym*) help students achieve a greater balance between logic and creativity and serve various functions: becoming centered and focused (Cook's Hook Up); improving hearing/listening skills (Thinking Caps); releasing energy—and learning—blocks (Brain Buttons); alleviating stress in the upper back, neck, and shoulders (Owls); fluency in reading, writing, and spelling and alleviating stress in the lower back (Lazy 8's); improving memory—storage and retrieval—(Calf Pumps); and elevating the energy level (Cross Crawls).

Students have little difficulty doing the exercises; they are not required, but almost all students do them. Exercises provide five minutes of letdown and buildup for students before they jump into the business for the day. Many students seem surprised when they actually experience some change—success—in their learning.

At the beginning of the semester, some of the younger students feel silly doing the exercises; however, when evaluations come in at midterm and again at the end of the semester, students consistently mention that they like the exercises. After the first two weeks, I ask a different student each day to lead the exercises while I take attendance. Then I join in. Many students tell me that the exercises have been an important and enjoyable addition to the class.

Ann L. Camy, *Instructor, English*

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StartSmart

Those first weeks at college can be frightening for many students, and we all have heard students say, "I don't know anyone and feel I don't belong here" or "I think maybe I'm in the wrong program" or "What do you mean—take lecture notes?" or "I can't possibly read all these pages by tomorrow." Faculty and staff at Durham College wanted to make that first college experience both productive and positive for our students.

We were familiar with research on the major indicators of student satisfaction and program completion, but we needed a strategy to ensure our students were receiving the best possible start on their college education. As a result, a bold new endeavor was planned—a *StartSmart* experience.

We developed five objectives for the *StartSmart* week:

- to foster social and academic bonds
- to set the tone for the academic year
- to identify preventable attrition
- to orient students to the surroundings (physical space) and
- to complete all *StartSmart* tasks before classes begin.

These objectives keyed on some of the ingredients that we knew led to happy, successful students; it was our aim to produce more of these students.

One week prior to classes, all first-year students began their experience with a timetable that included four days of seminar presentations, meetings with professors, and program/career path information sessions with graduates and employers. In addition, the college English placement testing for students in all programs, and math and accounting testing for students in some programs, were scheduled.

StartSmart was a partnership with the Student Council. The group of executive members embraced the week and worked tirelessly to ensure its success. Not only did they blow up hundreds of balloons to decorate the college entrances, serve as enthusiastic greeters and cheerleaders, and plan an afternoon of mixer activities, they visited every program area and handed out free tickets for a raffle—a bright red sports car, the perfect prize for a college student! Excitement increased throughout the week as anticipation and hopes built. There were chances at dozens of prizes, some given away at student success sessions and some at program activities.

Organizing the week was a huge task. After all, we were talking about timetabling, developing curriculum, and arranging "fun" for 2000 students—students who knew few, if any, other students and little about the campus.

Detailed procedures, directions, and other handouts were prepared and distributed to every program area. Working out so many details—including what was to be included in the first hour, when collegewide handouts were to be distributed, and what students might do in their free time—at first seemed extreme, but subsequent staff and student feedback confirmed that this planning had been the single most important factor in the week's success. Seminar presenters received prepared notes, complete with copies of overheads for topic areas that included note-taking, study skills, and time management. Friendly, helpful staff were available in information kiosks to answer students' questions.

Student timetables included times for ID photo sessions, book purchases, and loan pick-ups. Students were able to make registration changes during the week.

Comments on the evaluation survey told us that we had achieved far more than we ever thought possible. Perhaps the most gratifying comment was this: "Thank you for organizing *StartSmart* week. Now I am excited to be coming to Durham and eager to begin my program." *StartSmart* truly was a *Smart Start* for our students.

Romona Rickard, *Professor, Arts and Administration*

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Open House for Families and Friends

We believed that holding an open house for incoming nursing students *before* they began their program was a good idea. But we were three weeks into the semester before everything was ready and were concerned that holding an open house so late would be anticlimactic. However, we decided to schedule it anyway.

We circulated a sign-up sheet among the students. Those who could attend received printed invitations, inviting family members and significant others as well. To our surprise, 103 people planned to attend (we admit only 30 new students each semester), and our students told us that their children, spouses, moms and dads, and significant others were looking forward to the afternoon.

The open house was held on a Saturday. We greeted everyone, had refreshments, and gathered in a classroom. There we introduced ourselves, not only as faculty, but as wives, parents, grandparents, and students, too. We presented ideas about how families could provide support and about what students would be doing for the next two years. We provided handouts on time management and ways to reduce stress, as well as quick and easy recipes. We answered questions and let families share how they could help the students. There were young children in attendance, so we limited the presentation to 20 minutes. Then, we led tours through the classrooms and skill laboratory. The laboratory, with its hospital beds and mannequins, especially impressed the children.

We asked the students to critique the open house. Among other things, they said the timing was perfect; they described an increased interest in socializing with the families of their classmates; and they made such comments as "my girls can now visualize where I am daily" and "it reinforced the importance of my family's support in helping me become a nurse."

We have continued to hold our open house several weeks into the school year. We discovered that it can be "better late than never," and later turns out to be better.

Darlene Grogan, *Director, LVN and RN Programs*

Jennifer Wilson, *Instructor, Nursing*

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Practice-to-Theory and Student-Centered Learning

As instructors, we invariably pattern ourselves after role models. Even during our most innovative moments, old habits and traditions die slowly—e.g., introducing material by lecture and demonstration, followed by hands-on laboratory experiences. However, I had an instructional problem: if the theory base became too abstract in introductory presentations, the body language of my video production students reflected their disconnection and discontent. The solution to this problem appeared to be introducing affective learning experiences almost immediately.

The practice-to-theory method works by giving students just enough information to perform a laboratory exercise and turning them loose to explore. After the hands-on activity, student projects become the foundation of an extensive lesson on the complex theories that tend to be so interesting to instructors everywhere. But this time, the students eagerly participate because of their recent direct experience.

For example, in the past I introduced students to the complexities of the video camera by pointing out the various controls and features—a typical instructor-centered lesson that is marginally effective. Now, during the second class meeting, groups of three students each produce a sequential list of camera operations with the camera and manuals in hand. Then the students use their lists to shoot a specific series of shots. Their obvious energy and concentration rarely had been evident during any of *my* lectures! The beginning videographers often start theory discussion as a natural part of their affective experiences. Theory lessons are based on examples drawn from the lab activity and, therefore, are more student-centered. The continual breakdown of these learning experiences into short, carefully planned lectures, followed by learning activities, climaxed by theory discussions, has led me to believe that these concepts can be applied to a wider range of instructional settings. I overheard a video student describing this class to a friend: "The course is really different because you learn sort of backwards, and the time goes by fast."

Joseph Osmann, *Associate Professor, Communications*

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College Catalogs: Who Needs—oops!—Reads Them?

Idly curious, I began following correspondence about college and university catalogs on the Internet. Comments like "often published but never read" and "our most expensive, least read publication" were common. A casual examination of almost any catalog yields an obvious explanation: policies of the institution, language of the institution, faculty and staff of the institution, history of the institution, pictures of the institution. The catalog easily convinces the user it was written by the institution, about the institution, and for the institution. Rules, regulations, policies, and concerns of the institution dominate page after page. Even the most impartial reader must wonder if anyone uses the catalog. One also wonders why institutions do not pay more attention to this critical publication.

I became aware of this problem working as a faculty advisor. Even though I gave students our catalog and the catalogs of institutions to which they planned to transfer, they still came back confused and often upset that I had asked them to read such boring, difficult material. As result of my experience, I chose to conduct a content analysis of college catalogs for public two- and four-year institutions in Arkansas. My purpose was to estimate their usability by prospective students.

The problems with the catalogs began with lack of focus. They seemed to be written for multiple audiences: trustees, alumni, faculty and staff, other institutions, legal system, government agencies, and, in theory, prospective and current students. The demands of the educational, governmental, and legal systems result in gobbledygook stuffed into formats so rigid as to rival the Tin Man minus his oil can. If institutions must serve multiple audiences with one publication, perhaps they could develop it for the audience least prepared to use it: prospective students. If the intention of the institution is to inform prospective students, then they need to adapt the reading difficulty and focus to fit this primary audience.

The literature seems to agree that college catalogs are boring and difficult to use for anyone, including counselors and advisors. Still, many institutions see them as recruiting devices, and most institutions expect students to know and abide by the rules and regulations published in the catalog. This expectation that prospective and/or current students use the catalog seems to mandate that catalogs be usable. Operating under this premise, I examined the general information section of 21 catalogs for public two- and four-year institutions in Arkansas for readability and student focus. To estimate readability, I used the Flesch Reading Easy Score which includes difficulty and human interest paired with the Fry readability graph to determine a grade level. To examine student focus, I analyzed lead sentences under major headings and first subheadings and examined photographs. Lead sentences were categorized as focusing on the institution, on students, or on description. Photographs were classed as emphasizing students, students and faculty, faculty, or non-human/group subjects.

The analysis revealed a marked sameness among the catalogs. The reading level on the Flesch Reading Easy scale was very difficult for 16 of the catalogs and difficult for the remaining five. The lowest grade level for any catalog was 16. These reading levels suggest the reader must be a college graduate to read a catalog designed in theory for prospective students, many of whom may not read above the ninth or tenth grade level.

The reading level for these catalogs, paired with the human interest score, presents an even greater challenge. All the catalogs fell into the dull category with scores below 10. Five catalogs had human interest scores of 0. A thoughtful person can only conclude that a college graduate might be able to read these catalogs but would probably choose not to do so. Certainly, a high school junior or senior would have great difficulty reading and understanding this material.

The analysis of the lead sentences suggested an intense focus on the interests and policies of the institution. Seventy percent or more of the lead sentences in every catalog were focused on the institution or were mere description. Less than one-third of the sentences were focused on the needs and concerns of students. The point of view was that of the sender—the institution, with little regard for that of the receiver—the student.

The analysis of the photographs suggested an inconsistent use of pictures in catalogs. Only five

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catalogs focused on students in half or more of the photographs. Seven catalogs had more than half of their photographs focusing on faculty or non-human/group subjects. The distribution of photographs suggests a lack of controlling purpose for the development of the catalog; certainly, students do not appear to be a primary audience.

Although I did not include active/passive voice as part of the study design, I found verb usage in these catalogs to be heavily passive. Freshman composition courses demand active voice; we teach students to write active and force them to read passive.

* * *

If students need the information in college and university catalogs, then perhaps the institutions should establish simple guidelines governing their catalogs:

1. Determine the purpose of the catalog.
2. Determine the audience of the catalog.
3. Determine the lowest reading level of prospective students and write the catalog at or below that level.
4. Write in active voice, address students directly, and personalize the writing by using "you."
5. Use photographs that emphasize students and faculty and reflect the gender and ethnic makeup of their particular student body.
6. Test catalogs with the audience(s) that will be using them.

* * *

Perhaps students will never choose college catalogs for entertainment. However, they should be able to pick up a catalog and find information they need to help them select a college and succeed once they get on campus.

Marty Terrill, *Director, Honors Program*

For further information, contact the author at North Arkansas Community Technical College, Pioneer Ridge, Harrison, AR 72701.

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Teaching Assistants: God's Gift or More Trouble Than They Are Worth?

Teaching assistants can be what you make them. I have found that sharing my expectations about the roles they are to play before the term begins makes them more successful. The following guidelines have helped my teaching assistants become more fully involved in the teaching/learning process.

* * *

• **Affirm students**: Give students plenty of positive feedback which is sincere, is genuine, and lets them know you are aware of their efforts and progress. Even the smallest compliment can mean a great deal to those who may be dealing with anxiety and apprehension, and learning new skills. Remember, you will help set the tone for the course. When you give criticism, be certain it is constructive, helpful, and positive.

• **Remember that not all students are in college for the same reasons**: Many will be new to college; others will have experience. The goal is to work with and motivate students from where they are. Students' reasons for taking the class will vary. Being aware of this will help you to help them.

• **Have an attitude**: Make it your goal to be cheerful and "up" no matter what is going on with you outside the classroom. When you are in class, you are there for students. Leave your problems at the door. Bringing problems into the classroom leaves students uncomfortable and/or confused. Lead with your positive energy—it *is* contagious.

• **Be flexible**: If the instructor wants to try something new or unplanned in class, go with it. Be open to change and experimentation. Always be respectful of the instructor and his or her plans and goals for the class.

• **Help one another**: If two or more TAs are working in the same class, keep the lines of communication open. If you do not have an answer or do not understand how something is done, ask.

• **Listen for student suggestions**: Students often have terrific ideas about activities, in-class work, or how something might be done more effectively. Or, they may confide concerns to you which they would not feel free to communicate to the instructor. If the instructor is open to it, pass along student concerns and ideas to her/him for consideration.

• **Remember and use students' names**: Are you pronouncing names correctly? What do students prefer to be called? Taking the time to chat with students will help them feel more comfortable and confident in class; help them see you are a helpful, approachable individual who is there to assist them in achieving success.

• **Encourage acceptance and understanding of all types of students in your class and/or among small group members regardless of gender, ethnic background, religious/spiritual affiliation, challenge/disability, or sexual orientation**: Keep yourself in constant check. Are you giving preferential treatment to specific students because they are like you? Similarly, if you find that there is prejudicial treatment between students, discuss it with your instructor.

• **Monitor small group activities**: Reiterate what your instructor has indicated should be accomplished in your group. If students are still unsure of what to do, go through the activity or assignment with them yourself. They will take their cues from you and model your behaviors. Be an up, open, and positive coach.

• **If a directive is given to students which does not make sense to them, explain *why* you or the instructor is asking that the task be done in a specific manner**. If you do not know yourself, find out and be sure to convey it to them. Students are usually more willing to follow through with requests if they understand the *purpose* behind them.

• **Lead by example with an appropriate level of discourse**: Avoid foul language. Though you are not an authority in the classroom, you are in a position to positively influence students.

• **Develop a sensitivity to problems**: Take note of problems, both big and small. Do not wait and let a small problem develop into a larger one. Deal with it in a mature and professional manner. Let the instructor know of the situation, even if you think it is only a potential problem. Inform him or her of students with negative attitudes, students who are not cooperative, who are not getting along with others, or who are

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reticent about activities. Do not forget to encourage and stroke the egos of those with attitudes—they may need it more than most!

• **Keep track of time**: A specific amount of time will be allowed when you get into small group activities. Be sure that you are allowing plenty of time for everyone to participate. DO NOT get sidetracked with questions and conversation. Get down to business immediately and use time left over at the end to answer questions/concerns, look at student work, or accomplish whatever else is needed.

• **Be cognizant of learning disabilities**: If a student approaches you regarding a learning disability, send him or her to your instructor. NEVER suggest to a student that you feel he/she is having problems grasping the subject or ask if he/she has a disability or challenge. More generally, if you note that any student is struggling with any aspect of the course, inform your instructor of the situation.

• **Take your work seriously**: You have a crucial part in assisting students in becoming less apprehensive and better-skilled in your discipline. Being in top form—prepared, ready to get down to business—will help students enormously. If you are organized, they will be organized. If you are tentative or unclear about assignments and activities, they will follow suit. Make it your responsibility to know what will occur during each class period. Be familiar with chapters and subjects being covered before you come to class.

• **Do not baby-sit**: Your job is to assist students and your instructor, not to do students' work for them. If, for example, they have questions and you know the answers can be found on the syllabus or in the text, request that they first look for the answers themselves and suggest where they might look. If they are still in need, they can get your help in finding answers or solving problems.

• **Above all, enjoy yourself**: Being a teaching assistant is a terrific, one-of-a-kind opportunity for you to develop and to demonstrate instructional and leadership skills that will serve you well in college and in work.

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Middle College

Middle College, a program for at-risk high school students located on the De Anza College campus, was established with the Fremont Union High School District in January 1989. The program was modeled after the La Guardia Project in New York; its philosophy was to keep students in school and help them raise their expectations for academic success in high school and college.

Fremont Union High School District was seeking to combat a rising dropout rate. Administrators from the District and De Anza College had read about the La Guardia Project and met to discuss whether a similar program could be instituted. Agreement was quickly reached and a memorandum of understanding established. Responsibilities for both De Anza and the District were clearly defined. De Anza's responsibilities included:

- providing office space for three instructors;
- providing dedicated classrooms;
- waiving all student tuition fees except parking fees;
- providing registration assistance;
- affording Middle College students access to all programs and services just as any other college student, with the exception of athletics; and
- providing high-level administrative oversight.

Fremont Union High School District's responsibilities included:

- providing high school instructors;
- providing an operating budget;
- purchasing college textbooks, materials, etc. for students;
- screening and selecting students;
- monitoring student progress;
- overseeing disciplinary action; and
- providing high-level administrative oversight.

One of the most critical components to the success of the program is its screening process. Students who fit the following profile might be suited for the Middle College environment:

- the student may be "at risk" of dropping out of school;
- there may be a clear discrepancy between standardized test scores and grades;
- the student should show adequate social adjustment within the regular high school environment but may express dissatisfaction with that environment;
- the student should be able to work independently in a flexible environment;
- the student may be a creative, artistic individual—a nonconformist;
- the student should express a sincere interest in completing high school and going on to college even though the "paper evidence" such as grades and attendance may indicate otherwise.

Much time has been spent educating school personnel about the purpose of Middle College. A brochure has been developed to enhance the self-selection aspect of recruitment. This brochure is mailed to all sophomore and junior students in the district. After initial recruitment meetings are held at each school, a districtwide parent-student night is held. Middle College students are selected from the five high schools in the Fremont Union High School District. Some are self-selected (they hear about the program from graduates and friends), and some are selected by teachers and school personnel.

Students are asked to write an essay to be submitted with the application. Students also are required to submit teacher recommendations. After their files are complete with transcripts, recommendations and essay, students are interviewed along with their parents. Upon completion of this process, students are selected for the program. Many more students apply than the program can accommodate.

Middle College students enroll in both high school and college courses. They receive high school as well as college credit for college courses. An advantage of this program is that the serious student not only completes requirements for high school graduation, but gets a head start on his/her college career. Some students, upon completion of the program, have earned as much as one year of college. Three teachers from the high school district teach the required high school classes. One teaches a two-hour interdisciplinary course in American history, American literature, and creative writing to 35 eleventh-grade students. Two teachers at

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the twelfth-grade level share 70-80 students and teach writing for college/contemporary literature and economics/U.S. government. These teachers have a strong counseling background and handle all but the most severe discipline and personal problems.

Some students begin the program at age 16; therefore, one of the major issues for these students is moving to independence and assuming the responsibilities which accompany their transition to adulthood. It is important, from the beginning stage, to get these students to shift from external controls on their actions to internal controls. Program supervisors attempt to teach them to respect reality, whether pleasant or painful. Most of the students are bright but have avoided the reality of school, sometimes by cutting classes or by adopting inappropriate coping strategies. Instructors help them make changes to initiate successful behaviors. Many of these students do not deal effectively with authority. Instead of getting hooked into power games, students are encouraged to take charge of their lives. The staff is firm, but fair. Positive behavior is reinforced, and acknowledgment is given for even the smallest accomplishment. Instructors intervene when appropriate, but they allow as much independence as possible.

A six-year longitudinal study on student success indicated that 87% of the students successfully complete the program. (Success is defined as completing the necessary high school requirements for graduation.) It also found that 90% of the students continue with their college education at De Anza. They then transfer to the Cal State University system, the University of California system, or private colleges throughout the U.S. De Anza's 1995 commencement speaker was a 1992 Middle College graduate, who had just graduated from UCLA *summa cum laude*.

The De Anza Middle College was the first of its kind in California. The program has received numerous awards, including the 1993 National School Board Association Award (recognizing the top 100 programs in the nation). It enrolls approximately 100 students annually; more than 300 students have graduated.

This program is a valuable addition to the college community. While bright, these at-risk students were likely to drop out of high school and never attend college. They now contribute to the De Anza classroom environment and are reported to be enthusiastic students. And because parents are grateful to the program for helping their children, some make sizable donations to the program.

De Anza College has a strong community outreach philosophy. The Middle College is but one of De Anza's outreach efforts into the community and but another example of its commitment to expanding student diversity and developing proactive strategies to combat increasing dropout rates from its public schools.

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Team-Teaching in an Interdisciplinary Environment

The modern classroom infrequently capitalizes on the inherent connections between disciplines. Faculty meet infrequently and share ideas even less frequently with one another on content or methodology. Yet linking disciplines is relatively easy, as demonstrated by our experiment.

In an effort to provide students with a more integrated view of the human past, we fused World Civilization to 1300 (history) with Western Humanities to 1550 (composition and humanities), team-teaching each component course and offering them in tandem. The combined course met two days a week on the quarter system, for four and one-half hours each day, for a total of 10 credits. An explanatory note was included in the class schedule requiring students who registered for one course to register for the other, with class size limited to 20.

Fusing the curricula of both classes presented several problems. First, we wanted to integrate each course without sacrificing any of the material. Second, we wanted ample time to emphasize the interrelationships between the courses, which was, in essence, a new subject. On the surface, these wishes appeared difficult to realize. We found, however, that the overlapping areas were numerous. Moreover, we found that the expanded time format of the team-taught class would provide ample time to cover the material of both courses, as well as to expand the humanities component to include the literature, art, philosophy, and culture of the Far and Mid-East, and Africa.

A quick look at our texts validated this approach. The humanities text began each chapter with a historical overview; the history text ended each chapter with an overview of culture. The interdisciplinary approach expanded on elements already present in the curriculum, but made the connections more clear. We created one syllabus for the ten-credit block. Selections from the texts of both courses, both primary and secondary, were combined to form one set of assignments for each topic. Students received one grade for the block, which was recorded for both the history and humanities courses.

The length of the class meeting posed a problem. Although students frequently register for back-to-back courses, the block course was taught as a single unit, often taxing attention spans. We varied our activities, using film, slides, discussion, oral presentations, lectures, collaborative learning, and frequent guest lectures to enhance the presentations. The meeting time was divided into one-hour segments, each of which ideally required active participation from students: small group analyses of texts, problem-solving activities, group assignments, or oral presentations. To stimulate interest and provide a change of pace, the class sampled food from many cultures midway through the class period. Students were refreshed, and their appreciation of the particular culture under discussion was greatly enhanced.

Once this problem was addressed, we found that the interdisciplinary approach had several advantages for students. Both instructors were present for the full session, and both were involved in the presentation of material. This sparked critical thought in the students, for the instructors freely disagreed with one another on matters of interpretation. Students benefited from the diverse instructional styles; they received comments from both instructors, and although a single grade was assigned, different perspectives were presented in the instructors' written comments.

The integrated environment of the course allowed the instructors to promote writing across the curriculum. No in-class examinations were administered; rather, several different types of writing assignments were required. These assignments required students to synthesize material from the different disciplines. Students were asked to write formal analytical papers, creative pieces, film and book reviews, and museum explorations. The written assignments often were discussed in class, stimulating critical ability and providing further opportunities for linkages between the disciplines. For example, students were given the option of writing a dialogue between Medea, the heroine of Euripides's play, and Pericles, whose "funeral oration" appears in Thucydides's history of the Peloponnessian wars. Students then shared their creations with the class, and the instructors and other students commented on their particular viewpoints. Presentations stimulated a critical appraisal of Athenian democracy and tied together a literary, historical, social, and political approach to Greek civilization.

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The integrated approach provided an increased opportunity for multicultural investigations. For example, students studied ancient creation mythologies in small groups. Samples from Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, Japanese, and Native American mythology were used. This activity clarified the similarities and differences between various cultures and allowed the instructors to expand further on material that typically cannot be covered in normal time frames and with more traditional approaches. The role of women and other social groups can be studied in this way also.

Oral presentations were equally effective. When studying Rome, students were given a variety of topics from which to choose, including art, architecture, daily life, cuisine, military life and warfare, politics, slavery, and Roman emperors. The material was discussed after presentations, which was an effective alternative to the lecture format.

The complete integration of the courses created several exciting possibilities. The class was able to focus on the literature, philosophy, art, music, and history of a single culture in each session, presenting students with an holistic view of a particular era and civilization. Field trips and other experiential activities were possible. For example, during a session on Africa, a group of African drummers performed for the students and explained the role of music in Africa. Following this event, the class visited a local museum and explored the riches of African art. The remainder of the session was spent discussing African geography, language and ethnic groups, and major civilizations of antiquity. Finally, a guest lecturer discussed African folktales. Written assignments required students to read an African novel or folktale, and to analyze the cultural traits and historical realities mirrored in the fictional portrayal.

The study of the Far East was similarly integrated. Students studied Zen Buddhism from many perspectives, including a reenactment of a Japanese Tea Ceremony, an experience of a Zen meditation, the creation of a Japanese landscape, and an examination of the rise of samurai. The class also explored origami and made some of the most popular figures. Japanese dress, language, history, and the origins of the samurai were explored, creating a unified picture.

Written assignments required students to read excerpts from the Lady Murasaki's *Tale of the Genji* and to write a creative fictional autobiography of the author in the context of her times, drawing from historical and literary sources. Alternatively, students were asked to view a film related to Japan, such as *Heaven and Earth* (not the Oliver Stone version) or *Shogun*, and to write a critical review of the work, discussing its historical accuracy and comparing it to other works they had read.

In general, our experiment was a striking success. Students remarked that they had never before had as much interest in attending class and were surprised to find that their attention was held for the entire afternoon. A real bond developed between them, and a real understanding of other cultures was fostered. Many students expressed a desire to visit more museums to learn about regions of the world they had not previously explored.

This ten-credit course provided a means, at least for one ten-week period, by which students could see the integration of the human past and perhaps proceed towards a more effective integration of their futures. They learned that great literature cannot be understood without a knowledge of the era in which it was written, that great art reflects the philosophical and political events of its day, and that political events do not occur in isolation, but rather grow out of deeply held philosophical and ethical beliefs.

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A New Use for Voice Mail

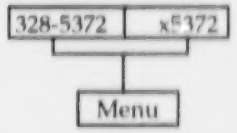
The concept dawned on me while I was listening to the menu options being recited by the automated answering system. I thought that this technology might be adapted for use with my students. If it was possible for our college's voice mail system to handle extended messages, it would provide an additional resource for my students. The premise was to place extended information messages in a voice mail system that students could access for review of lecture material. Previously, I had thought of using a computer/e-mail setup for such a connection, but a major drawback was that not all students have computers or modems.

Students always seem to have questions which come up at times other than during lecture—e.g., when notes are being reviewed and textbooks read. Our student population is completely commuter-based, so in most cases they study at home and at times that vary widely with work schedules and family duties. With voice mail, the students would be able to access information 24 hours a day from any phone. The cost to the student would be minimal, and no special expertise would be required.

I sought student input about the value of my idea and asked how they would like to see the system operate. Several useful ideas came from these discussions. The students suggested that I give a page reference to my lecture notes (my students are given a copy of my lecture notes and diagrams at the beginning of the semester). Also, the students wanted input into lecture topics selected for review in the system.

I wanted the system to repeat messages and advance through various messages. I asked if our voice mail system could perform these tasks. Apparently, it could, but I would have to experiment because such a system had not yet been tried. I asked for the maximum number of mailboxes, since I wanted to leave several messages for each class. Students would be able to access the messages separately rather than having to listen to several messages just to reach the message they wanted.

Our phone system allows for a maximum of nine menu selections from the touch pad of a push-button phone and has a maximum storage time of approximately 16 hours. The system has the capacity for expansion. I configured the system so that when students call my individual college phone number from off-campus, or my extension from on-campus, they hear a menu which gives them nine options (see the diagram below).



1 Leave a message mailbox or default connection to secretary
2 Anatomy & Physiology I Listen only to mailbox #1
3 Anatomy & Physiology I Listen only to mailbox #2
4 Anatomy & Physiology I Listen only mailbox #3
5 Anatomy & Physiology I Listen only mailbox #4
6 Anatomy & Physiology II Listen only mailbox #1
7 Anatomy & Physiology II Listen only mailbox #2
8 Anatomy & Physiology II Listen only mailbox #3
9 Anatomy & Physiology II Listen only mailbox #4

Use * to recycle between mailboxes or 1-1 to repeat message

The first menu selection is for access to a voice mailbox where they can leave messages or be connected with our departmental secretary by default. The next four selections are for students enrolled in my Anatomy and Physiology I course. The remaining four boxes are for Anatomy and Physiology II students. All these mailboxes are listen only; the students are not able to leave any messages. Students may advance to any mailbox within their course at any time by pressing [*]. They move to the end of a message by pressing [3-3], and they can have the message repeated by selecting [1].

Some students have used their answering machines to record the messages. This has reduced the cost to repeat usage for students in peripheral locales that require toll calls. In some cases, the microcassette tapes

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from the answering machines have made it to portable machines, so I am taken for a ride as students commute to campus.

The initial setup of this system was completed just prior to the first major examination in each course. This "perfect timing" allowed for an immediate trial of the system. My students and I selected the topics to go into the system, and I recorded the informational messages. The messages varied from five to 12 minutes.

Office Services Department has analyzed the activity in each mailbox. By examining the number of calls to each individual mailbox for the two courses, it could be determined if individual callers accessed more than one message per call. Also, there were some topics in which the students had more interest and which drew more calls. It could not be determined from the data who made the calls, but it is safe to assume—based on the numbers—that a large percentage of the classes took advantage of the opportunity.

The system certainly seemed like a success from the examination of the early reports. Students said it helped them; they understood better after hearing things a second time, grades were better, and it was a good opportunity to catch up when they could not make it to recitation or office hours.

Students were told that the messages were not intended to be a substitute for attending lecture, and attendance did not drop when the system was put into place. The students knew that a quick review of a topic would in no way cover the detailed content presented in a 75 minute lecture.

In the Anatomy and Physiology I class, the first examination had more "A" grades than with any other class in 20 years of teaching. Although I cannot make a direct link, circumstantial evidence indicates that this new technique had some positive influence. Learning should certainly be enhanced when a student can listen to information messages as many times as he/she wants and at a convenient time. The students also found out it was best if they had studied the topic prior to calling! Of course, I was delighted they reached this conclusion.

With such evidence of success, I decided to continue to expand the use of the system beyond reviews for exams. Now I place messages into the system on a weekly basis as we work through different topics. And, I use the system to give students their grades quickly and anonymously by the evening of exam day. This timely access to grades seems to reduce anxiety and provides me with more valuable lecture time which was previously spent returning examination papers. Students now review examinations in recitations or in private during office hours.

Utilization of this system can be affected by its expansion capabilities. When all of my mailboxes were full prior to an examination for both classes, I was using 16% of the system's total capacity. The cost of expansion would have to be weighed in relation to the value added for students.

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"He's the Dude Who Makes Salad Dressing": Relating to Students

In a literature-based writing class, I introduced "A Rose for Emily" (William Faulkner) and discovered that most students have a difficult time putting events into sequence and struggle to understand the meaning of the story. Homer Barron, Miss Emily's ill-suited suitor, is an interesting character and always the subject of questions. Consequently, I spend time explaining Faulkner's use of symbolism, using Homer as an example. A student asked why Miss Emily found the rugged man from the north so attractive. I had the class "in the palm of my hand," enthralled, listening to every word. In explaining the woman's attraction to the man, I said, "It's like how I would feel if Paul Newman walked in the door!" I immediately saw that I had put a damper on the discussion; my class wilted before my eyes! There was an awkward silence which finally was broken by two talkative, uninhibited young men sitting in the first row. One looked bewildered, turned to the other, and whispered in a voice that could be heard by everyone: "Why does she get the 'hots' for someone who makes salad dressing?"

The Problem

This was my epiphany! I saw that I had become one of those archaic, distant professors I had complained about throughout my undergraduate and graduate days. I remember thinking that this segment of academia had their own clubs and rituals based in the middle ages. They spoke a language that had little meaning to my world and were incapable of understanding my youthful culture. Now, standing in front of the class, I could not conceive of the idea that the students knew Paul Newman only because he made salad dressing and spaghetti sauce. How could they not know he was the idyllic, blue-eyed sex symbol of not long ago! I knew it was time to update my material and make a concerted effort to relate to my students—peppering my before-class banter, in-class lectures, and one-on-one instruction with more contemporary ideas. I knew this would not be an easy task, but the thought of joining the ranks of the crusty, unapproachable and archaic academics before I was 45 was disturbing.

The Solution

I have discovered several successful steps to becoming a more relevant and contemporary instructor, perhaps adding to my ability to reach the students and motivate them to learn the subject matter that *I* find stimulating and exciting.

Step 1. Let the students know you are *human*. You had problems finding a parking spot, had a hectic morning, are having problems with your car, and so on. In short, let them know that you are dealing with many of the same problems they are facing. But, be careful not to become the proverbial bore who does nothing but talk about himself or herself and family.

Step 2. Teach *accountability* with *empathy*! Let students know you have dealt with many of the same problems they are now facing. Academic life has not changed; students are still struggling to find appropriate majors, dealing with finances and all the other bureaucratic obstacles one must hurdle before obtaining a degree. There are many students who feel disillusioned because obtaining a degree is nowhere in sight. I usually mention that it took me 20 years, with some interruptions—such as three children, one husband, and one dog—to complete two degrees. This is usually followed by a pep talk about not giving up on goals and plans for the future.

My goal is not only to teach literature and writing theory but to teach acceptable student responses. Essays which have spent several days in the laundry pile, folded, placed in the back pocket, and smoothed out on my desk before being submitted are not accepted. I mention the professors I have had who refused to accept writing assignments on paper with one corner slightly turned up, or with too much "white-out," too many erased words, and the like.

The most stressful time of the semester for me is the day the final term papers are due. Because I do not accept late assignments except in extreme emergencies, I find that there have been several deaths in the students' families, and I usually end up feeling responsible in some way! When reminding students several weeks in advance about the due date for the term

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papers, I mention that my grandmother died four times while I was in college! Again, many students feel that even if they were not in class (they were in South Padre Island, at the dentist, or at some other important activity), the assignment that was due on that day should automatically be accepted when they return, at their convenience. You will know when the emergency is real.

Step 3. Be *current* with the times. Know about world, state, and local events. Reading the local newspaper one evening, I found a brief notice that parking violations would not be issued for 10 days because the printer had not sent the new tickets. Since my students and I face the same parking problems, sharing this information was met with applause and enthusiasm.

Attend films and know the current idols or heart throbs. In an introduction to drama and Greek tragedy, I lectured on Aristotle's *Poetics*. I talked about the Greek theatre-goers and the playwright's intent in producing a catharsis in his audience. A young woman asked if it might have been how she felt while crying during *Legends of the Fall* with present-day heart throb, Brad Pitt. Exactly! A lively class discussion ensued examining recent films that have had this effect on the students.

Conclusion

Evaluate the rapport you have established with your students. Your goal is not to become an equal or to establish friendships but to have your students see you as a human being who is interested in the subject matter of the course, in the world, and in them.

Silvija Meija, *Instructor, Humanities and Performing Arts and Department of Communication*

For further information, contact the author at Lansing Community College, P. O. Box 40010, Lansing, MI 48901-7210.

Sports: A Bridge to Cultural Understanding

Competitive sports always offer opportunities to bring out both the best and worst in participants. An interesting dilemma presented itself during one of my physical education classes. The course was a multi-skill-level badminton class of 41 students. Their diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds were getting in the way of their desire to understand better a game they enjoyed playing. In this situation, calling the score and lines was providing the occasion for acting out distrust and disdain based on cultural and ethnic differences. Students were losing the essence of the game experience by engaging in arguments and threatening behavior that reflected their lack of understanding of each others' cultures.

However, I realized that it was not enough to explain basic game etiquette; some other strategy for reducing or eliminating the discord had to be implemented. One afternoon as I was playing with a group of students who were calling out scores in Spanish, the perfect strategy ocurred to me. At the next class meeting I presented my idea. Instead of limiting ourselves to calling scores in English, we could use the game situation to learn the numbers in other languages. We might also learn common greetings appropriate to a class setting. I emphasized the value of understanding and tolerance in a learning environment.

At first the students seemed surprised and unsettled by my suggestion. I asked those who thought it might be a good idea to write in their own language the numbers 1 through 15, as well as a few common greetings. I announced that I would make copies for class members who requested them. Almost everyone took to the idea. I, along with the students, learned and began to use numbers and terms from the several languages represented in the class. Soon a score of 8-9 was being heard as "ocho-nueve" or "bah-gio." Students taught each other and me the correct pronunciations. Differences had become matters of interest rather than occasions for conflict.

I have continued to use this strategy for promoting understanding and positive relations among my students. Each time I introduce the idea, there is the initial stage of distrust, but it is soon followed by enthusiastic engagement in the project. And each time I am reassured that sports are wonderful vehicles for bridging the differences between players.

Carole A. Beeton, *Instructor, Physical Education*

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Interactive Notes on the Worldwide Web

Over the years, I have developed a set of biology class notes which I make available at the reserve desk in the library for my students. These notes have been used extensively; many students have reported that having the notes before class helps them better prepare for and concentrate on the lecture. After attending a half-day workshop on HTML (HyperText Markup Language), I decided to put these notes in Cyberspace, our global library. Advantages include:

- Students will use the Web, a skill that some may argue is becoming as essential as the three Rs.
- "Cool sites" of relevance to the subject matter can be brought to the students' attention.
- The notes can be updated automatically by changing information on the Web itself.

This concept is simple, is not labor intensive, and can be applied to any subject area. For those instructors whose class notes are already on a computer, very little time is necessary to convert them to HTML; and translating programs are available.

My homepage, http://west.cscwc.pima.edu/~achristensen/ann1.html, contains my photograph, current office hours and schedule, a link called "cool sites" that may be of interest to my students, and another link called BIO 181 "syllabus and class notes." The cool sites are Web sites from the biology departments of other institutions or from industries such as publishers or biotechnology companies. Clicking on "syllabus and class notes" sends the students to my syllabus. Each topic within the schedule of lectures is a link to the notes on that subject. Within the notes, each key word is linked to a custom search of the Web. There is also a link to our departmental home page, http://west.cscwc.pima.edu/~achristensen/personal.html, that contains information about course offerings and other instructors.

I use a search engine (Lycos is excellent for biology; others are better for other subjects) to seek out information on a particular key word. Lower-division students generally do not formulate efficient searches, and this method helps them find the information they need. For example, in my notes on cell organelles, listed under the functions of the lysosomes, the words "programmed cell death" are linked to the following URL: http://a2z.lycos.com/cgi-bin pursuit?ab=apoptosis+cell+death+lysosome. My students are probably not familiar with the term "apoptosis," nor am I interested in their knowing it, but this word does add to the search. Some authors use only one of several synonyms in their text on their Web sites.

Should students wish to try their own hand at formulating a search, there is a backlink to Lycos, in which students are invited to type in their own key words at the end of each set of notes. One may argue that students should learn to formulate their own searches, and I have one such assignment which they must complete before beginning work on their term paper. They must turn in a complete Internet search, as well as a library search, on a topic. The quality and depth of term papers have substantially improved since I adopted this assignment. No longer do I receive term papers entitled "AIDS," "Dolphins," or "Global Warming." Students appreciate the tremendous wealth of information on these topics and focus on a more manageable subset. Recent papers have included in-depth discussions of the treatment of Valley Fever in dogs, the use of Interleukin-2 as a treatment for cancer, and the physiology of the vomeronasal system of snakes, to name only a few.

The use of a search engine helps keep my notes current. Moreover, students are exposed to interesting information related to the lecture material that enhances their overall learning environment. This technique can be of use to instructors in virtually all subject areas.

Ann Christensen, *Instructional Faculty and Chair, Department of Natural Sciences*

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One Hour Does Make a Difference!

The implementation of instructional technology is key to our future success. Faculty feel the pressure and raise such issues as time, access to computer resources, and skill development.

The literature on innovation adoption tells us that innovators and early adopters represent approximately 13% of the faculty population. They do not need our help! However, the early and late majority account for about 68%. How does a staff development department assist this group in adopting new educational technologies?

Our objective was simple: develop a hook that would bridge the gap from non-involvement to classroom application. With the help of our Faculty Innovation Centre, we developed a one-hour workshop called "Sixty Minutes with Powerpoint." This painless, one-hour time commitment was designed to expose faculty to an application of presentation software that would show immediate results in the improvement of their teaching. Faculty were asked to bring any material that they were using in their subject areas, and then each left the session with a diskette and a printed sample of presentation material. The majority of projects included overhead presentations or handout material.

By hosting these small group (4-5) sessions in the Innovation Centre, we introduced faculty to the Centre's services, including technical support, new product information, scanning, internet, and consultation. They were invited to come back on their own time to complete presentation projects or learn more. The gap was bridged. Over half of the participants returned to the Centre to experiment with new uses of technology in the classroom.

After hearing of the success of the program, many administrative departments also took advantage of the "Sixty Minutes." A new standard was established for internal presentations, conference proposals, and contract bidding.

Offshoots of this introduction have been varied, ranging from the development of professional overheads, to production of multimedia presentations and to development of curriculum using authoring software. Staff have developed increased skill in assessing the variety of off-the-shelf multimedia products that are available in their fields of expertise. Individuals also feel more confident in dealing with the innovators and early adopters. The intimidation has been reduced, and they are evaluating the use of technology based on their curriculum needs.

The keys to this very successful project include:

- the use of non-technical instructors who have software skill but possess excellent teaching qualifications and strong people skills
- promotional material that emphasizes classroom application
- an initial, minimal commitment of time
- access to support after the first "Sixty Minutes"
- small class size with maximum hands-on application and
- a curriculum that addresses and emphasizes the issues regarding instruction technology (e.g., cost, training, improved quality of learning).

A follow up to the "Sixty Minutes" sessions was a full-day workshop, "Great Expectations: The Role of Educational Technology in the Classroom." The event showcased examples of faculty implementing instructional technology. Presentations by colleagues were instrumental in persuading more faculty to cross the gap into the world of technology.

With more faculty interested in classroom applications, the role of the Faculty Innovation Centre has increased to include more support for faculty involved in video classroom, multimedia authoring, CD-ROM production, and Internet applications. Yes, one hour really does make a difference!

John Hatton, *Manager, Staff Development*

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The Paperless Composition: Computer-Assisted Writing

The instructional challenges created by students who have poor writing skills are further intensified and complicated by increasing demands to modify curriculum for distance education. Paperless computer-assisted writing provides a viable strategy for helping students attain necessary writing skills and answers the question of what to do about the submission of papers in a distance education mode. It enables students to write under optimal conditions, to learn the process with minimal instruction, and to access the courses through distance education.

Paperless computer-assisted writing gives students the opportunity to analyze and edit their compositions with comparative ease, thanks to user-friendly software. With the paperless approach, the student has the opportunity to e-mail questions to the professor if writing is done outside of class. The turnaround time for pre-evaluation input from the professor and evaluation for grading purposes is minimized significantly. Rather than being returned during class time, the compositions are instantaneously received and returned upon the completion of the writing and grading processes.

* * * *

At Miami-Dade Community College, the professor accesses the composition by going into WordPerfect, clicking on the Yellow File Folder, clicking on the appropriate drive and directory, followed by the file which is to receive attention. Commentary is inserted between the lines of student writing, differentiated from student writing in bold type, underlining, italics, or color. The composition is e-mailed to the student, and the file is saved onto a disk for future reference.

There are several advantages to using this strategy. Revisions can be made quickly and easily. Upon receiving the graded composition, the student determines the nature of the errors and makes the corrections by inserting the revised material beneath the appropriate comments in the text. If the student is unsure as to the nature of the error or about the means of correcting it, it is a simple matter to e-mail questions to the professor. The revision is then e-mailed to the professor for final approval. Sometimes more than one revision is necessary even when help is available during the revision process. The process remains the same but is enhanced by the fact that revisions can be transmitted rapidly, making it possible to obtain student papers that are more accurate in their final form than would have been possible with other methods.

Paperless composition offers the opportunity to capitalize on the individualization of instruction. Professors, regardless of writing strategy, have always included individualized comments on student papers. With the paperless composition, the remarks are handily typed into the text. Messages regarding the performance of the student on the e-mailed assignment are also included in the message box on the e-mail screen. A swift response is important.

Paperless composition creates major difficulties for students bent on cheating. Cheating is minimized as writing is done in the computer classroom or laboratory. Students check into the designated writing facility by computer, using Lab Passports, and leave their driver's license with lab personnel. There are no disks, no papers (other than pre-approved materials that may accompany the student to the computer lab or classroom), no unsupervised writing, and no opportunity to have surrogate writers. With the paperless method, there is no hard copy, thereby eliminating any possibility for substitution of pre-written compositions.

* * * *

The paperless method is a necessary adjunct to the formulation of a distance delivery system. The unwieldiness of transmitting compositions via mail delivery is a major deterrent to any sophisticated distance education program. The mails are frequently slow and delivery uncertain; control of author integrity is difficult. With access to centers identified for the purpose of writing and transmitting student assignments, control can be maintained over authorship, and submission of materials can be effected instantly.

In addition, the environmental impact of sacrificing trees to paperwork cannot be discounted. Paperless writing is "one small step" to preserving our leafy heritage.

Finally, the paperless composition offers solutions to

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some of the most pressing and distressing problems confronting professors who are responsible for teaching clear, logical, and honest writing. This is a real alternative to the age-old scenario of writing and evaluating college compositions: confining students to classrooms to control cheating; giving them license to write outside the classroom where cheating is easy and rampant; condemning students to the inescapable delays created by the return of hard copy after evaluation and revisions; and limiting the numbers of writing assignments to accommodate the time available for numerous paper-shuffling steps! The establishment of an ongoing dialogue by e-mail between the student and the professor adds a human dimension to the writing process that can best be achieved with the paperless strategy.

Jean McDonald, *Chairperson, General Studies Department*

For further information, contact the author at Miami-Dade Community College, 500 College Terrace, Homestead, FL 33030-6009. e-mail: mcdonald-h@mdcc.edu

Communicating in Signs

The library faculty at Midlands Technical College (MTC) has turned its attention to a small, but important group of students—the deaf and hearing impaired. Often, there are no visible clues that identify these students. However, through outside sources such as church groups, deaf associations, and library contacts, we have been able to recognize some of these students on sight.

The college provides interpreters for classroom situations and programs, but many of these students use the library on their own time. Moreover, the number of deaf and hearing impaired students on campus is increasing, and the library faculty wanted to provide improved library service. One librarian who had received training in sign language offered to present a basic introduction for the library faculty and staff. A site and time were selected to accommodate the maximum number of library personnel. The class met for one hour each week for six weeks; the director of the library, four librarians, two library technical assistants, and one office systems technology faculty member enrolled.

The course included a brief history of American Sign Language, learning the manual alphabet, fingerspelling and signing techniques, and a 75-word sign vocabulary. Practice exercises were designed to reinforce the learning process. Some of these practice sets included letter combinations such as ab, ut, ie; double letter drills; and numerous words.

We took signs from ASL and syntax from our familiar sentence structure. The words, numbers, and concepts selected were appropriate for an academic library environment. For example, the vocabulary included signs for such words as library, bookstore, dictionary, deaf, borrow, go, come, thank you, Bible, telephone, and college. Through a combination of fingerspelling and signing, the members of the class could make short statements and ask questions such as "Here is a dictionary" and "May I help you?"

The library purchased a CD on sign language and a videotape to enhance and reinforce the learning that occurred in the class sessions. These sessions have enabled some of the library staff to communicate with our deaf and hearing impaired users, and some staff have expressed an interest in continuing their study of sign language.

Virginia Brooker, *Collection Development Librarian*

Elizabeth Haworth, *Director of the Library*

For further information, contact the authors at Midlands Technical College, P. O. Box 2408, Columbia, SC 29202.

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Commemorative Speeches: Sharing Similarities

My students make commemorative speeches, recalling memories of loved ones who made indelible marks on their lives. The recognition that someone has influenced another to achieve crosses all cultural levels. Students hear classmates thank grandparents for listening, teachers for taking time to explain concepts, and children for providing unconditional love. They are reminded that all humans cherish intangible, yet essential values.

The only requirements for the commemorative speech are that students focus on someone of importance to them, speak from a manuscript, and restrict remarks to three minutes. They must describe actions that illustrate why their special person(s) motivated them.

After hearing these speeches over several semesters, I have come to believe that all students should have the opportunity to meet these wonderful sources of inspiration. So now, students are encouraged to invite these special individuals to class to honor them in person. [A dental hygiene student invited two of her instructors, and it was the first time I witnessed my colleagues speechless!]

In a class of five Asian students, two African American males, one physically handicapped person, several students over the age of 40, and others, I began to understand the transformation that can take place when people from various backgrounds and cultures share intimate life details. One Asian student talked about her mother and the hours she worked at night to provide support for her family. She started crying when she talked about a boy she dated who did not meet the approval of her parents. During this difficult year, she distanced herself from her mother, only to return after her parents' fears were justified. This was a story everyone in the class could understand even though it was delivered in a clipped Japanese accent. Another student recalled how difficult it was for international students to adjust to the United States. The speaker said that American students often give international students elaborate handshakes as a way of trying to make them feel welcome. What they do not realize is that these gestures are very foreign; one student thought his new American acquaintance was trying to break his wrist. Another shared how his mother had packed their belongings and moved to Boulder, Colorado, to get him away from gang influence. He explained how much he missed his mother when she moved back to Los Angeles after he graduated from high school. He shared how often he called his mother to persuade her to return to Colorado. As a punch line to his speech, he said he has continued to call her every week to get her to change her mind, always calling collect. At the word "collect," the whole class broke out in uproarious laughter.

Not once have any students thanked people for giving them money or for helping them acquire status or powerful positions. When students speak of inspirational people in their lives, they fondly remember simple, yet touching acts. It is the genuine gestures—taking the time for who they are and, most important, giving them unconditional love—that have made the most impact. Diversity adds extra flavor to the speeches, but the speeches have universal meaning because vivid personal examples speak to people of all backgrounds.

After my experiences with these wonderful speeches, I went on to adapt this activity to my other classes. In humanities, I ask students to identify an artist who has influenced their outlook in some way. In English, I ask students to look for historical or literary figures who helped change their vision. In these classes, I bring examples of authors who have written, in the prefaces of their books, why certain people earned a special thank you.

With my practiced eye, I see that students devote significant amounts of time selecting the best words to communicate deep, sincere feelings. They learn to trust their observations and appreciate the audience's instant reinforcement of their message.

Would I apply this activity in a math or science class? Most certainly! It is important to single out someone who has sparked curiosity or who has removed barriers to understanding the abstract mysteries of math or science.

In adaptations of this speech, I stress the commonalities, the universal interpretation of this activity. All people, no matter their background, need moments of

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love and recognition. All people, no matter their economic status, can become excited and inspired by gestures of goodwill. After delivering and listening to commemorative speeches, it is easy for students to identify our human similarities, the first step in learning to appreciate other cultures. We become transformed as we listen and share some part of others' lives, and we are reminded of what is important in our own.

Michele Dolphin, *Instructor, Speech*

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Using Spreadsheets to Inform and Motivate

In teaching basic psychology courses, I have found that creating a spreadsheet of students' grades is an effective means of teaching psychology, stimulating student motivation and self-awareness, and developing analytical skills.

Information Spreadsheet

The spreadsheet includes the student's identification number (ID) and a banner of activities, including tests, essays, class attendance, and projects. Copies of the spreadsheet are distributed to the students after each test and classroom activity. As the semester progresses, the grade for each activity is recorded in individual cells of the spreadsheet. The computer is set to add each grade and determine a current total score for each student. The list of student ID numbers is then rank-ordered by the accumulated points.

I make a preliminary determination of the number of points the students will need to earn the grade of A, B, C, or D. I then explain that the cut-off for each grade is preliminary and final determination for the grade in the course will be made during the performance analysis session conducted on the last day of the course.

Grades that Inform and Motivate

The purpose of sharing the scores and the accumulated points earned for each test and task is to inform, but it has a greater influence. By printing and distributing the spreadsheet after each activity, the students have an ongoing, objective record which allows them to track their performance during the course. This track record displays not only the event and each student's performance, but provokes students to compare their previous performance with current performance and the performance of the entire class.

Once the comparison is made, I encourage them to think about the factors that have influenced their performance. I do not focus on the grade as an end point, but rather as information about learning techniques. Once students analyze their grades, they can move on to determine what techniques in their study habits are most effective and what factors in their lives are influencing their learning. They are encouraged to think about the consequences of their in-class behaviors as well as their study routines, habits, and conflicting responsibilities. Being able to track their performance on the spreadsheet gives students objective evidence that will motivate them to modify their own goals and study routines—focusing on the effects that their jobs, their social lives, and their study habits have on their academic performance.

I also inform the students that these data are critical pieces of evidence to be used in determining what learning techniques are most effective for them. Furthermore, I encourage them to determine how much effort they must expend to earn the grade they want. I encourage them to ask themselves, "What will I have to *change* to earn the grade of B?" The students learn to interpret the points they have earned for their grades to motivate additional hours of study, different study techniques, reassessment of their priorities, and analysis of the competitive realities of the college situation. During the semester, as the spreadsheet cells are filled, students are encouraged to analyze their performances—in essence, to learn how to learn.

Students Share the Spreadsheet

Students are encouraged to compare their performances with those of their classmates. I suggest that they share and discuss in groups their individual study techniques and the success or failure of those methods. This helps to form alliances between classmates so that they can continue to compare and review their work throughout the course. This collaboration assists students in the process of their personal discovery and in gaining an awareness of individual differences. Comparing spreadsheet data encourages self-reflection, data analysis, and performance appraisal.

This focus on individual student's learning enhances cooperative learning. The students are encouraged *to ask why* each performance occurred, *to learn how to ask why* each performance occurred, and *to learn to ask how* classmates prepared for a test.

Student-Teacher Relations

Seven or eight measurements are taken during the semester, and students begin to develop an objective

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orientation to the classroom; the process creates a true learning and teaching environment. The students realize that the grades reported on the spreadsheet speak for themselves. The spreadsheet reduces potential conflict between teacher and student; dissatisfied students can review the grade data alone and then objectively compare performances, study habits, sources of reward, and personal situations with those of their classmates.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the spreadsheet focuses the individual student's and the class's attention on what has been learned. At the end of the course, I ask students if they are different and, if so, how they are different from the first day of class. Routinely sharing the spreadsheet with students encourages their self-awareness, enhances the process of learning how to study, and moves them toward a higher level of maturity.

William R. Kuhl, *Instructor, Psychology*

For further information contact the author at Middlesex Community College, 155 Mill Road, P. O. Box 3050, Edison, NJ 08818-3050. e-mail: placemrt@digex.net

Building a Multicultural Library

A multicultural library became our summer project when the Community College of Denver's Program Review Committee suggested we begin a small lending library in our Basic Skills Lab. Many students use the main campus library in downtown Denver, but our campus is several miles from that site and some students do not have cars.

With a minigrant from the Teaching/Learning Center, I decided to purchase books and videos to begin developing a library which would celebrate the diversity of our students. Our small library contained mostly nonfiction books intended for faculty, but we wanted to encourage students to read and needed books on a number of reading levels that would appeal to their interests. Our idea was to expand our original library for use by both staff and students.

The Cultural Diversity Committee agreed to help choose the books and videos. Titles were gleaned from many sources: a language arts conference presentation on Latino literature, literary magazines, newspaper articles, book reviews, and the committee members' own favorite books and videos. We met at the Tattered Cover Bookstore on a Friday afternoon to purchase books.

When we arrived at the bookstore, each of us headed in a different direction and met later to review the books we had chosen. As a basic skills teacher, I favored fiction books that were appealing and easy to read. Vocational teachers wanted some nonfiction books suitable for research reports. We were able to agree on both types, and we purchased more than 60 books, many by well-known authors such as Maya Angelou, Carlos Fuentes, Forrest Carver, Amy Tan, and Rudolfo Anaya. We reserved the remaining funds for purchasing videos on another day.

I inserted library pockets and cards in each book and placed them in the Basic Skills Lab. The instructors there took charge of the check-out procedures. Now we introduce students to the library as they begin classes, and we distribute a list of the books and videos to faculty members and urge them to encourage students to use the library as they work on their assignments.

We hope to achieve two goals with our small multicultural library. The first is to begin the process of creating a full on-site library for our students. The second is to build a community among faculty and students as we read about and begin to understand our differences.

Alice Stephan, *Instructor, Basic Skills*

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Students as Playwrights?

Our students do not like writing persuasive essays, and few of us like reading them. Yet each semester we ask thousands of college freshmen to prove their argumentative skills. We ask them to pick a major contemporary issue—e.g., gun control, abortion, euthanasia—and argue for one side or the other.

Sounds simple, but something strange happens when our students try to write persuasively. They submit essays that lack passion and unity. Papers are long on direct quotations and short on substance. The relevance of each issue remains buried under a mountain of facts and citations. At home we suffer through the thick stack, wondering where we went wrong, asking ourselves why all of the writing sounds generic. Our students go through the motions of research writing and end up producing essays with no sense of purpose or audience.

But the persuasive essay does not have to be the most dreaded event of the semester. Students can generate their own list of current issues; they are less likely to write dispassionately about ideas they have themselves. However, some potential issues could be offered for their consideration: for example,

- Should standardized tests be used to measure intelligence?
- Should high schools provide day care for teen mothers?
- Should all U.S. citizens be required to speak English?
- Should fighting be allowed in professional hockey?
- Should certain albums come with warning labels on them?
- Should the Miss America pageant ditch the swimsuits?
- Should condoms be made available in public schools?

The possibilities are endless. For fun, tell students they are going to write a one-act, one-scene play (brace yourself for the collective groan). Have them choose an issue from the class list and, in a short dialogue, create two fictional characters to debate that issue. Finding a title and a scene before they begin this dialogue is usually helpful. For example:

Books or Babies?

Scene: Noon, a high school cafeteria. Two girls—one of them visibly pregnant—are standing in the lunch line.
Alicia: Hey, girl, how come you haven't called me lately?
Gwen: I don't know. I guess I've been busy.
Alicia: You embarrassed to be seen with me?
Gwen: No, it's just that I think you should take your classes more seriously. Do you know you're only two points away from flunking algebra ?
Alicia: Hey, after I deliver this baby I'm gonna have all the time I need for school. They're talking about setting up a day care her for those of us with children.
Gwen: Wait a minute. They cut girls soccer but they can afford day care for irresponsible students?
Alicia: Irresponsible? I happen to need my high school diploma to succeed in this world. If I don't get it I'm just going to make my child repeat the same cycle of poverty and ignorance that I'm trying to escape.
Gwen: Okay, but wouldn't such a facility encourage more kids to have babies out of wedlock?

We are not talking Shakespearean tragedy here, just a simple page of dialogue. I give my students about 30 minutes to write; they rarely need more than that.

Next, ask for volunteers to perform the plays in front of the class. Let the playwrights cast characters based on appearance, personality, or whatever. It is important for the students to see the issue in a social context. These dialogues will boost class participation, encourage discussion, and spark healthy debates. The role-playing is fun and requires students to consider both sides of the issue.

This activity is also a form of brainstorming and prewriting. Most of my students leave class with an outline or a discovery draft. And, instead of running off to loot the library, they tap into their knowledge and experiences, which in turn personalizes their essays.

This exercise need not be limited to composition courses. It works within other curricula, too—e.g., political science, ethics, and sociology. I often feel

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guilty about using this activity—it involves absolutely no preparation time, no teaching (in the traditional sense of the word), and no grading. But the essential element here is not the teaching; it is the *learning*. With this exercise your students will not even realize they are forming opinions, thinking critically, and drafting their persuasive essays.

Matthew Samra, *Instructor, English*

For further information contact the author at Kellogg Community College, 450 North Avenue, Battle Creek, MI 49017.

Class Pictures and Collaboration: Creating Support Groups

Students in organic chemistry at Central Florida Community College have a significant problem: as CFCC is the only college in town, they lack a support group of students who have had these or other advanced chemistry courses. Upper-class and graduate students are nonexistent. My students have a wide diversity of backgrounds and abilities, and many need exceptional motivation to be successful in an advanced course.

Although students depend heavily upon me, they must also learn to work together and learn from each other. One of the things that I do to promote a sense of community is to take a class picture at the beginning of the term. Like so many great ideas, it was originally suggested by the students. I take the picture and frame an 8x10 print for my office wall. Many students want reprints of their own. I find this helps them begin the course on the right foot—students get a sense of belonging.

Immediately, I provide impetus for group work by assigning homework problems which would be very difficult to work individually, and then I strongly encourage students to collaborate. Since our college services a three-county area and my students have varied schedules, the most practical method of forming study groups is to let them decide upon group membership, meeting places, and other details. I circulate an information sheet on which they write (voluntarily) their address, phone number, and schedule; and then I make the list available to the class. I have found that students are soon spending time studying together, even when no assignment has been made. I reinforce this interest by holding pizza parties after class, and students organize activities outside of class.

My class completion percentages are high, and my students are successful in follow-on courses. For example, the only professional school entrance examination which has a separate section for organic chemistry is the DAT (Dental Aptitude Test); none of my students has ever scored below the 82 percentile on the organic chemistry section. Currently, three of my organic students are in dental school, and two were accepted directly into dental school without other predental studies.

The successes of all my students indicate that developing a sense of camaraderie among classmates encourages and promotes individual successes.

Support groups, shared learning, and extracurricular activities go a long way toward smoothing the transition to and improving student performance in the difficult follow-on courses.

Richard Pendarvis, *Instructor, Chemistry*

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Setting the Standards for Student Behavior

Students might be more enthusiastic about engaging in active learning techniques if they could realize some personal, as well as pedagogical, benefit. Having stumbled onto this astounding revelation—that grades *do* interest students—I decided to allow students to determine a portion of their final grade through self-assessment.

❦

The strategy is simple. Each semester, during the initial class meeting, students form groups (three to five members each) to determine criteria by which they should be evaluated as students. Each group shares its list with the entire class, one criterion at a time. At the end of this process, and after I have recorded the criteria on the board as the groups reported, I announce that I will combine their list with those from my other classes and distribute a master list. I then remind them that they will write a self-assessment at the end of the semester and assign themselves a numerical score.

❦

My students developed the following list of student behaviors during the spring 1996 semester: attend class; be punctual; be prepared; pay attention; take notes; follow instructions; study; do assignments; participate; ask questions/seek guidance; set goals/work toward goals; be committed; be organized; be positive (have a good attitude); work to full potential/take pride in your work; be open minded; be creative; be considerate of others; help others/share/network; be considerate of the equipment/facilities; challenge the instructor; have fun; learn; and be honest.

The only criterion that needs some explanation is *challenge the instructor*. It has been on almost every list since I began this process; students appreciate the stimulating spirit of this item. It is not meant to be an "in your face" challenge, but a constructive and beneficial behavior for both the instructor and students.

❦

Students benefit from this aspect of active learning on many levels. They make a significant and positive contribution to the structure of the course on the first day of class. They are positive about the rules of the class because they created the standards. On those rare occasions when the class has to be stimulated to participate or dissuaded from side discussions, I only remind them that *they* developed the list. I believe students participate more in class activities and discussions because they understand it is what they are supposed to do and because they know they are in a safe environment.

The students' job is not easy, as is evident from the length and magnitude of the items on the list. From time to time, I casually ask about their level of awareness of their roles and responsibilities, a gentle reminder that they should be conscious of their contributions and commitment to the success of the class.

At the end of the semester, students write a one-page description of how they fulfilled their responsibilities. They also assign themselves a numerical score, which I add to their total points for the course. Students have always exhibited thoughtfulness, introspection, and creativity in their self-assessments.

However, some students are more critical of their achievements than they should be. When students are so self-critical that their self-score will lower their final grade, I intervene to the extent that their assessment is not a serious detriment.

The students are not the only beneficiaries of this process. I have found my classes more enjoyable and easier to teach, the students more attentive and responsive, and the atmosphere more relaxed and open.

Jim Carraway, *Instructor, Computer Science*

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Games for the Mathematics Classroom

Games, especially variations of popular game shows and board games, can generate student interest and enthusiasm in the classroom, build self-esteem, and increase self-confidence.

Concentration is based on the children's memory game. Individual cards, numbered 1-20 (the number of cards used for each game may vary), are arranged on a large poster board. The class is divided into two teams. A monitor turns the cards, revealing a problem or solution. If the cards represent a "match," the team takes another turn. (A "match" can be a problem and its solution or an English phrase translated into math. For example, a card labeled "Twice the sum of 'x' and 'y'" would match the card labeled "2(x+y)."') If the first team does not produce a match, then the other takes a turn. From this point, the players choose one card at a time and try to remember where they have seen the matching card. This game generates excitement and enthusiasm, especially when a team's "match" is challenged.

Jeopardy is based on the TV game show. A game board displays mathematical categories and points. The class is divided into three teams, and each team is given a call bell. The first team selects a category and point amount; a card is turned revealing a question or problem. The first team to ring the bell answers. If the answer is correct, the team gets the indicated point amount; if incorrect, the amount is deducted from their score.

Wheel of Math is based on the TV game show, "Wheel of Fortune." A large spinner is divided into 16 sections, each labeled with mathematical topics and points. The first team selects a member to spin the wheel. If the spinner lands on Quadratic Equations for 700, for example, then the team would have to answer a question or solve a problem dealing with quadratic equations. If the answer is correct, the team has a chance to choose a letter which ultimately spells out a mathematical phrase or a motivational message.

Mathematical Pyramid is based on the TV game show, "$25,000 Pyramid." It helps students increase their understanding of key mathematical concepts and terminology as they describe these concepts in their own words. The game board consists of six pyramid-shaped cards labeled with mathematical categories. (A sample category is "A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words." If a student selects this category, then he/she would have to describe these things associated with graphing functions: domain, intercepts, vertex, range, axis of symmetry, asymptote, and ordered pair.) The class is divided into two teams. The first team picks a category and selects two players. The two players on this team decide who will give the clues and who will receive them. Once this is decided, the student giving the clues has 30 seconds (more time may be given if desired) to describe seven mathematical terms or concepts to his partner. The team is then awarded points, depending on the number of terms identified correctly. Then, the next team chooses from the five remaining categories and proceeds in a similar fashion. The team with the most points wins.

* * *

All of these games can be adapted for any level math course and used in other disciplines, as well. They may be used as a review before a test or for a change of pace during a regular class period. Taking 20 minutes to play a quick game of "Jeopardy," for example, helps reinforce important concepts and gets the students involved.

Margie Lewkowicz, *Instructor, Mathematics*

Gail Gavant, *Instructor, Mathematics*

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Cultivating New Adjunct Faculty

A spreadsheet comparing academic departments' use of full-time/part-time faculty, included in our college's quarterly Institutional Productivity Report, indicated that, at 58 percent, my department led the college in the percentage of student semester hours taught by full-time faculty. I was surprised because we employ a substantial number of adjunct professors for a variety of general education and specialized elective courses in the behavioral and social sciences, education, and health and fitness areas. This staffing profile reinforced for us the importance of cultivating a well-qualified and effective adjunct faculty pool. Some of our discoveries and successes are described here.

Two years ago, I administered a needs assessment survey of part-time faculty prior to a formal start-of-the-year collegewide orientation meeting and held personal interviews with current adjunct professors. Feedback revealed predictable needs and concerns related to facilities, support services, equipment, and supplies. However, an unanticipated problem surfaced—adjuncts were uncomfortable with the use of the term "mentor" to describe a full-time faculty contact person. The mentor designation implied a controlling, supervisory relationship. Furthermore, the traditional mentoring relationship fostered the assumption that an adjunct faculty member was limited in terms of background, experience, and academic credentials.

To correct this perception of adjunct inferiority, bolster the value and importance of adjunct professors, and develop a more effective communication and support system between full-time and part-time faculty, we substituted the term "liaison" for mentor. A liaison relationship implied mutual support and appreciation, a team approach to instruction, and a greater sense of professional equality. This change of terminology, and the goals behind such a change, resulted in positive feedback from both full-time and part-time groups. Increased comfort on the image level alone provided a necessary substructure for new methods of contact, communication, and support.

At present, liaison assignments involving two-person teams of full-time and adjunct faculty members are routinely assigned at the start of each semester. In most cases, these relationships have generated goodwill, mutual support, resource sharing, and increased adjunct faculty involvement with department planning and activities. Occasional problems of incompatibility are quickly corrected through intervention and/or reassignment.

As an enhancement to the liaison relationship, the department began to pilot test a more structured approach to instructional effectiveness and quality control—the *Guidance and Assessment System for First-Time Adjunct Faculty*. We had four major objectives in mind: to provide ongoing assessment of the educational program, to monitor the teaching and presentation skills of new adjunct professors, to enhance the orientation and professional development of adjunct professors, and to reinforce communication and positive rapport between adjunct professors and full-time department faculty.

During each semester, there is important interaction between a first-time adjunct and a full-time department member.

* **Welcome and orientation contact**. Early in the semester a department faculty member will make formal contact with an assigned adjunct, respond to general questions, offer to share (as appropriate) course syllabus and other general information, and make referrals on unique needs or administrative matters.

* **Pre-observation conference**. At some point (after approximately 25% of instructional days have transpired), a meeting is scheduled to check on progress and arrange for a mutually convenient set of classroom visitations when each will visit the other's class.

* **Classroom visitations**. The style and precise nature of these mutual visitations may vary somewhat based on relationships and preferences. For example, the atmosphere might range from a fairly informal peer coaching session to a formal instructional evaluation using approved institutional assessment forms for data collection, follow-up discussion, and recommendations.

* **Post-observation conference**. Shortly after each visitation (within one week), a follow-up session is scheduled to discuss assessments and offer a practical

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number (one or two) of targeted professional goals (i.e., suggested readings, experimentation with alternate techniques, review of support materials, attendance at workshops, etc.).

*** Information sharing with the department chair.** This stage of the process is designed to improve quality control, assist with future scheduling decisions, and review other by-products of professional interactions (i.e., curricular changes, instructional experimentation, academic enhancement activities, etc.). Overall impressions of department faculty based on formal qualifications, general communication, and assessment activities are shared with the department chair in confidence. Collaborative ventures and other suggestions are reviewed and discussed as appropriate.

The *Guidance and Assessment System for First-Time Adjunct Faculty* has been in effect for approximately 18 months. Survey documents and individual conversations reflect an improved work environment characterized by more frequent and substantive communication, greater comfort with both individual and department image, more efficient long-range course scheduling, and a series of unique professional collaborations and pilot projects. On the most general level, department faculty have developed a greater sense of trust and pride in an essential part-time support team. When necessary, part-time staffing changes have been made in response to poor performance and department concerns.

Planned interactions between full-time and part-time faculty members in common teaching disciplines have forced both groups to engage in self-assessment on course content and pedagogy. In several cases, full-time and part-time faculty have been motivated to pool their talents and resources in team-teaching approaches to both traditional and new curriculum. What began as a department concern with image and qualifications has evolved into a systematic process of orientation, guidance, and assessment.

Jared S. Graber, *Chairman, Department of Social Sciences*

For further information, contact the author at Valencia Community College, P. O. Box 3028, Orlando, FL 32802. e-mail: drjsg@sundial.net

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Writing an *Abstracts*

Faculty in community colleges and universities have seen innovations come and go. They learn new techniques only to have them become outdated. For more than a few, this has created a feeling of resistance, even to the word "innovation."

In *The Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers defined innovation as a technique, product, or idea which is *perceived* as new and advantageous. The desirable characteristics of innovations are:

- The *perceived advantage* of the innovation—an apparent utilitarian value—over current methods;
- The *compatibility* of the innovation with the practitioner's values and past experiences;
- The *accessibility* of the innovation, or the degree to which the innovation can be readily incorporated;
- *Divisibility* of the innovation, or the ability to try the innovation on a limited basis or in parts;
- The *communicability* of the innovation, or the ease with which it can be clearly and accurately described and, therefore, visualized.

Types of *Abstracts*

The most common *Abstracts* are:

- *Basic introductions to an innovation* (a definition or description with practical suggestions for use);
- *Descriptions of an innovative model program or project* (a description of the program, identification of key elements in the model, and suggestions of variations that might be used in adopting the model);
- *Annotated bibliographies* (bibliographic listings of useful publications in high interest areas which indicate how each selection could benefit the user);
- *Practical suggestions for managing use of an innovation* (intended as a vehicle by which long-term users share with new users some techniques for transition from old practice to innovation);
- *Innovative variations on existing programs or concepts* (a description of the variation; an explanation of how it is a departure from the original and how others can implement this improvement);
- *Research-based analyses of innovations and their effectiveness in improving instruction* (a discussion of the problem researched and the methodology [in lay terms] and the results);
- *Issue-focus papers* (usually speculative; factors affecting the teaching/learning process which are not innovations, per se: e.g., strategies for encouraging use of an innovation).

Guidelines for *Abstracts*

Each abstract should include two parts: (1) a description of the innovation and (2) a discussion of practical applications/implications. Additional guidelines include:

- *Audience*—*Abstracts* are written for staff and developers, faculty, counselors, administrators, and special groups. This *Abstracts*, for example, is intended for any faculty member, staff developer, researcher, or administrator who might wish to submit a manuscript.
- *Length*—Drafts should be no more than eight typewritten, double-spaced pages. We request that submissions be made on disk with accompanying hard copy.
- *Style*—Ideas should be expressed in a clear and jargon-free manner, avoiding sexist language. Include definitions of specialized terms.
- *Applicability*—Innovations should have potential for application in a number of areas and, preferably, be easily and inexpensively implemented.
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Tutoring: The Block Parent Way

How can we offer help to hundreds of math students if math centers are staffed with only one or two qualified instructors? Students who are receiving failing grades need help immediately to avoid getting too discouraged and losing interest entirely.

Tutoring: The Block Parent Way at Red Deer College is similar to the service provided to young school children who are invited to knock on the door of any home that displays a Block Parent sign if they are confronted with danger on the way to school or home. Block parents take pride in safeguarding school children; their services are offered at no cost to the community.

We ask instructors who wish to offer block services to our students to become Block Members of the Math Center. Any instructor who offers services may display a Member: Math Center sign and post office hours and other pertinent information at the office location. Students who see this sign know that they are invited to drop in for help in the area(s) of the members' specializations or levels indicated.

The members reach out to a larger body of students in a timely manner, and their college time becomes more cost-effective. Students' waiting time is minimized, and late appointments are often eliminated. Instead of being located in one area, the math center is now spread out among instructors. The number of students who need tutoring in mathematics and budget constraints continue to increase, and Block Tutoring is an ideal way to respond to both.

Ved Madan, *Instructor, Applied Science Department*

For further information, contact the author at Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada T4N 5H5. e-mail: vmadan@rdc.ab.ca

Let the Students Decide

You walk into a classroom on the first day with the 40 desks filled, five students sitting on the floor, and seven more standing around the classroom. Obviously, some of these students are attempting to register late. What do you do?

In fairness to the registered students, I ask the unregistered "crashers" to surrender their desks to the registered students. Then, for example, if there are three remaining desks and 12 eager students hoping to take the class, I have a difficult decision. Instead of expecting the 12 students to compete with each other, I send them outside to decide as a group who will take the remaining seats.

They may make their decision any way they wish—e.g., they can draw numbers, discuss units completed, or compare class requirements for their majors. (I provide a syllabus in case they wish to include class requirements in their decision-making process.) In most cases, some students leave immediately, which makes the decision-making process easier for the group. A "crasher" who remains could be a student who is more likely to be there at final exam time.

Gone are the problems of a "crasher" who walks in after the class has begun to tell you his or her story in front of everyone. Gone are your feelings of guilt if you do not take every student who says he or she must take your class to graduate, keep a job, or continue to live at home. Letting students decide who among the "crashers" deserves late registration is a useful strategy.

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